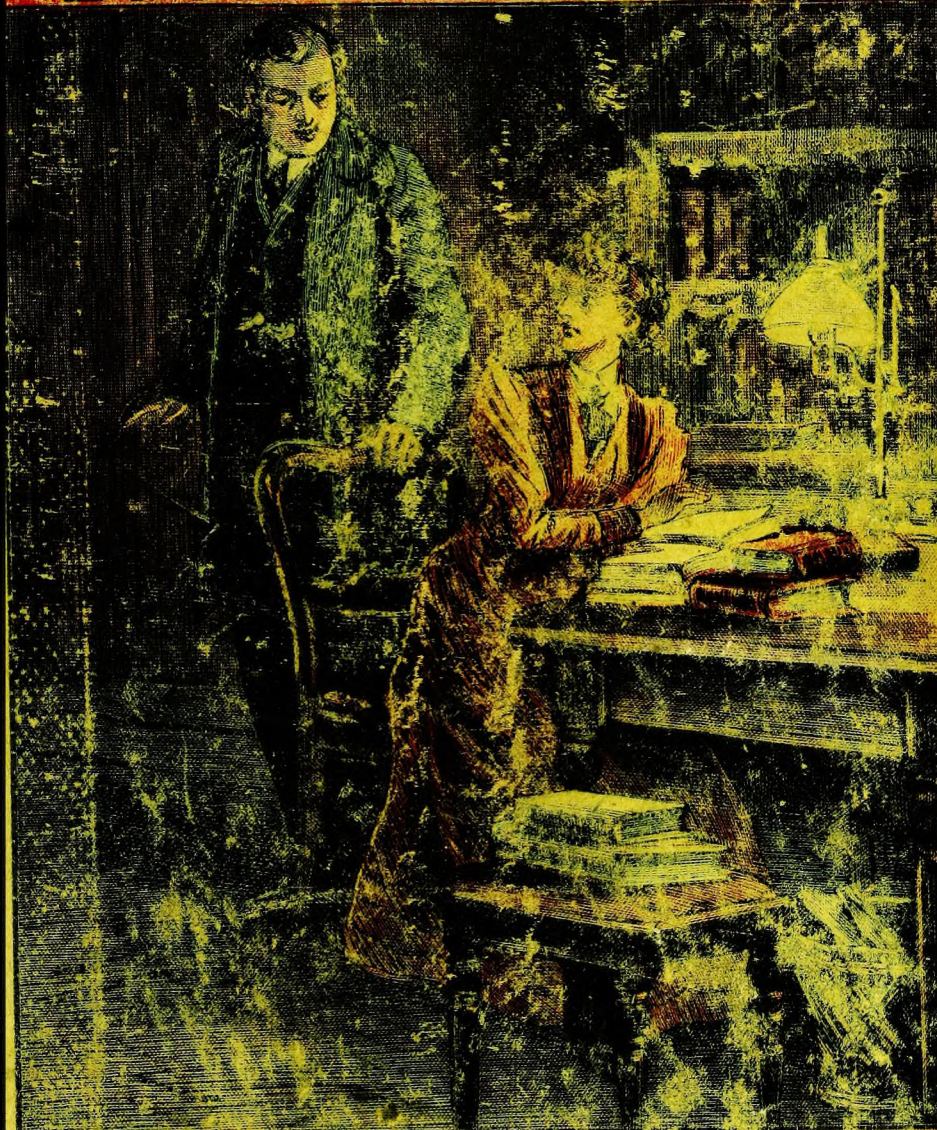




# DR JANET OF HARLEY STREET

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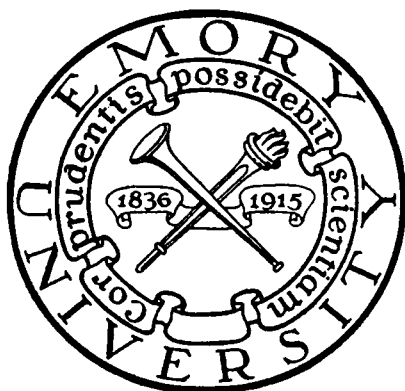
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Anabella G. Kennedy

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DR JANET  
OF  
HARLEY STREET

BY  
ARABELLA KENEALY  
AUTHOR OF "MOLLY AND HER MAN-O'-WAR," ETC.

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Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,  
Given to redeem the human mind from error,  
There were no need of arsenals nor forts.

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SHOWS IT TO BE  
IN SOME WAY WORTHY OF DEDICATION  
TO  
MY MOTHER.

THE AUTHOR.

# DR. JANET OF HARLEY STREET

## CHAPTER I.

A further love I do not understand.

IT was a perfect morning in June. The sun had taken long to penetrate and rout the mists which lay heavy over the land, interposing, as it were, between heaven and earth a cloud by which man might conceal the fact of his sluggard uprising.

But the *lux ab alto* is omnipotent, and the thick dews and vapours slowly lift at the touch of the sunrays, and evaporate into thin air, and the earth and the shortcomings of her children stand confessed.

Then, as ever, out of the heavy morning, pregnant with possibilities, the brightest day is born, so this June day, slow to develop, was growing every hour more beautiful.



The many tears night had shed in the darkness gleamed brilliantly amid the grass, or were tossed from the eyelids of the flowers in saucy answer to the wind.

The grey old face of the sun-dial, whose iron finger seemed to have stiffened with its everlasting pointing to the passage of the hours, grew warm in the sunshine, permitting its wet features to be dried by the hand of the young morning.

Over in a corner of the great garden, whence we are watching the dawning day, a marble Diana stood, dew-laden as if dripping from her bath, while beside her leaned a sculptured Momus, whose grotesque buffooneries wakened no response in the divine fair calm of her face. Poor Momus! he also wet and glistening, through what decades of chagrin had he thus grimaced beside his unappreciative neighbour! One could almost fancy him abashed and eager to shrink from before the maiden's calm-eyed immobility. Someone should, for pity's sake, have freed the wretched creature from his marbled martyrdom, and sent him back to old Olympus, there to waken the vulgar laughter of heathen gods.

The buffoon seemed out of place in that garden of nature; the long, cool avenues of shade, the rose-arbours and shrubberies, the plantations of slender-shafted pines, the dainty sweet community of

flowers, yielded their silence to the innocent chatter of the birds, nor held an echo for the cynical, coarse jesting of this civilised clown.

Some such reflections appeared to present themselves to the mind, and to be expressed in the glance of a young girl who, her hands and arms filled to overflowing with white flowers, came down a long avenue, at the end of which the statue stood. The densely-wooded sides of the path prevented her escape, or, to judge from the halt she made as Momus came in view, his leering eyes seeming in their wetness to glisten with unholy satisfaction at his perpetual jest, she would have turned aside.

A light and shadow passed all of a sudden over his features, as the wind bent a branch of the tree beside him, and the girl was almost betrayed into an exclamation of horror, as the movement of light across his face seemed like a spasm of life in it.

She slipped past him and took refuge with the maiden-goddess. The sculptured deity appeared to extend a hand of encouragement to her, and, turning her back upon Momus, she threw herself at Diana's feet, as any heathen maiden might have done who claimed the huntress's protection.

'I hate him! I hate him! I will have him broken up,' she cried vehemently. 'He is always sneering and making faces. Just when things

seem so delightful I come upon him, and he jeers as if nothing were true. Oh, how I hate him, Diana!’ she reiterated, stretching up her hand to touch the white cold fingers of the statue. ‘And this morning, when I am to be married, and will see the world and all the beautiful things in it, and be so happy, that horrid Momus sneers as if none of it were worth having. Oh, I do detest him. Don’t you, Diana?’

To judge by the look of grand disdain with which the goddess perpetually regarded him, one might imagine her to be in full accord with her votary’s sentiments, but whatsoever she may have felt, her marble lips recorded not, and the girl had to content herself with the sympathy she gathered from the statue’s fine smile.

‘How good the Marquis is,’ she went on presently, in a pleased reverie, ‘and what a happy girl I am. He is just like the old French marquises in books; he has such lovely manners, and makes such charming compliments. He is like a dear stately old father. And what a lovely day it is for my wedding.’

She broke into a happy, lively singing, laying her head beside Diana’s knees.

She was very beautiful and very young. Only seventeen, and that small span of life even had measured her lightly and left her childish for

her years. Her slim and supple height showed scarcely a womanly curve as she leaned back in girlish abandon against the friendly statue.

But in her deep eyes lay the gathering mystery of womanhood, in the full soft curving of her lips, in the delicate fine dilatation of her nostrils, and the sweet indecision of her white chin. Her eyes were grey and large ; clear and bright almost to colourlessness in moments of excitement, full and dark in moods of softness.

But moments of emotion were not frequent with her. Nature was at present spending her forces in fabricating the woman-face, in amplifying and smoothing the curves of cheek, and chin, and lip in intensifying the tint of the eyes, in curling the soft fine hair in rings upon the neck and brow, and in putting in the many other dainty delicate last touches of developed womanhood.

With a large number of women Nature finds, when all this expenditure has been lavished upon the exterior, that but little or nothing remains for inward graces ; her beautiful handiwork has the appearance of woman in all her perfection, but the warm flesh tints correspond to no fire within, the soft modelling overlies no sensitiveness of heart.

Pygmalion may cry in vain for love and passionate life to vivify his beloved ; she will ever remain cold and incapable of emotion, though



her beautiful hands and lips are warm and tender.

But Phyllis Eve belonged not to the order of painted waxen womankind. Even on that morning of her marriage, when she was but a girl in years and growth, she showed symptoms of that feminine subtlety—that nameless charm of mysterious and latent passion without which the most physically perfect woman fails to be attractive.

While she muses dreamily—the hours which are bringing her destiny creeping across the face of the sun-dial in grave, dark shade—let us briefly consider the circumstances under which she has grown to girlhood, and is so soon to pass the marriage-gates.

Her mother, the wife of a country rector, had, some three years previously, been suddenly widowed, her husband dying all at once from an unsuspected heart-disease. Trusting to what he had regarded as an iron constitution, and, moreover, suffering from the pecuniary exigencies which attach to many country livings, he had failed to provide suitably for his wife and daughter, so that these were at his death thrown upon the world, with nothing but a very small annuity.

Mrs. Eve, heart-broken at her husband's death, withdrew to a distance and settled in a small village in Devon. Here she rented a cottage

upon the estate of the Marquis de Richeville, an estate inherited from his English mother. The Marquis, a handsome man of sixty, who concealed a very graceless character beneath a very graceful manner, conceived a violent passion for the widow's young daughter, and was a frequent visitor at the cottage, where he contrived to introduce and make himself welcome.

Finally he proposed for Phyllis's hand, and after some objections, based upon her youth and the inequality of their respective ages, Mrs. Eve consented to the marriage, upon the girl assuring her that she was fond of their devoted old friend. Phyllis regarded her admirer from the standpoint of pure romance; out of her inexperience and young imaginativeness exalting him to a height so heroic that he would certainly have suffered from a chill had he known the lofty altitudes to which her fancy lifted him. His wooing was conducted upon those lines of distant courtesy which characterise a certain class of French alliances; he had confined himself to paying her delicate compliments and gallantly kissing her hand—in warmer moments permitting himself to salute her formally on her pretty cheek.

It was like a delightful story, she thought, that she should be the young mistress of his beautiful houses, should be able to place her dear mother in

luxurious surroundings and give her the comforts necessary to her failing health. Quite incapable of comprehending the complex subtleties of love, she was satisfied that her girlish liking for the Marquis was such as to justify her union with him, and was happy, as we have seen, in the thought of the life-long holiday it promised.

The church clock struck nine while she lingered still in the garden. Counting the strokes she sprang up quickly, with a gesture of dismay at their number, then she gathered her flowers together and started homeward.

She went hurriedly down the avenue, and came suddenly upon her bridegroom, who approached her from a side path. The sunlight fell full upon him; he was strangely excited when he saw her, his face looked rigid and grey, the lines left by dissipation strongly marked and marred the fineness of his features, the crow's-feet round his eyes, those which Victor Hugo calls furrows in which men hide their evil thoughts, gave up their lurking shadows.

As the young girl, lovely in her innocence and beauty, went towards him, her arms filled with her flowers, the smile her dreams had conjured up upon her face, he lost control still further. The coarse, crude passion of which alone he was capable blurred his habitual expression so that

Phyllis scarcely recognised him. With a stumbling stride he advanced, and seizing her in his arms, he drew her insistently to him, kissing her fiercely and repeatedly upon her cheek and lips.

Uttering an amazed, horrified cry, she pushed him violently away, thrusting him back with her flower-laden hands. The white flowers were bruised and broken in the brief fierce struggle, then were trodden under her feet as she escaped him and fled wildly homewards.

‘How dared he! How dared he!’ was all she could say, as the memory of his touch trembled through her like a taint.

Her eyes were full of fire, her face was deathly white, while a great circle of scarlet flamed upon her cheek where he had left his kisses.

Too hot and indignant to weep, she could but feel with every fibre and cry with all her revolted strength, ‘How dared he!’

Even so Diana might have passionately felt if Momus, with his jeering face and jesting mouth, had kissed her.



## CHAPTER II.

Early and provident fear is the mother of safety.

AS fast as her swift young feet could carry her, the girl sped homeward, conscious only of the one strong impulse to place as great a distance as possible between herself and her bridegroom.

Reaching her little white bedroom, she threw herself feverishly upon the bed, and laid her burning face against the cool, lavender-fragrant pillow. A nameless dread and sense of helplessness soon shook the strength of her fervid indignation. She had suddenly awakened to the consciousness of a vague, fearful chasm between her own nature and that of the man who, ere the shadow had crept two hours forward on the dial's face, would be her husband. Her young feet seemed to slip and tremble upon this chasm's brink.

'He must have taken too much wine,' she reflected, 'to make him seem so coarse, just like

a horrid, common man—not a bit like the courtly Marquis.’

She lay for a long time, like one wandering in a maze, groping amid and wrestling with strange, terrible shadows, which had arisen in her quickened mind.

She was recalled presently by her mother’s voice sounding quietly beside her, while a gentle hand was laid upon her shoulder.

‘Phyllis, Phyllis, what is it, dear? I have looked for you everywhere. Breakfast is ready—has been waiting nearly an hour. Does your head ache? Shall I bring your breakfast to you?’

‘Oh, mother, mother!’ gasped the girl, wringing her mother’s hand in hers excitedly.

‘I know, dear; it is an ordeal to leave home so young, and you have seen so little of life, but the Marquis is so kind, so good—’

‘Oh, don’t speak of him! Send him away, mother! Only send him away from me.’

‘My child, you are dreaming. Do you forget you are to be married to-day? Come, Phyllis, wake up! You have been too much alone with your fancies. It will not be long before you are at home again, and then you will have me with you in your beautiful house.’

‘I will never—never leave you. I will not be

married to-day. I will never be married. Oh, mother, save me, save me from him !'

'Save you from whom? From the Marquis who is so good to you? Why, Phyllis, what has come to you? It is foolish and hysterical to talk so,' Mrs. Eve expostulated firmly. 'All girls marry and leave their mothers. You must control yourself and not give way to such childishness. God knows you are too young, but what else could I do? There is nothing for you at my death, not even the little we have now, which is only enough to keep us from actual starvation.'

'Oh, let me work. Let me learn some way to get my own living and to help you. I could be a governess, or a nurse, or a nurse at the Hospital, like the rector's daughter.'

'You can be nothing of the kind, you foolish girl,' replied her mother, losing patience. 'Rouse yourself, dear,' she added in a kinder voice. 'Bathe your face and come to breakfast. Come,' she persisted, taking her by the arm, 'you must not give way to this hysterical weakness.'

Phyllis, worn out by her emotions and exertions, had no strength to resist further, and, accustomed as she was to obey her affectionate but firm-willed mother, she rose passively.

She laved her burning cheeks and eyes, and smoothed her ruffled hair, which had tumbled

about her shoulders in curly disorder. Then she followed Mrs. Eve downstairs.

She drank mechanically the tea poured for her, and ate a thin piece of bread-and-butter. Her exhaustion made her now very pale, all the fire in her face seemed to have passed into her eyes, which shone with an unnatural brilliancy.

Mrs. Eve maintained a quiet, continuous conversation, affecting all the while not to notice her distress.

When, however, two heavy tears rolled down the girl's white checks, and her unsteady lips tremulously failed to answer some question put to her, her mother spoke.

'Now, Phyllis, you shall tell me all about it. But be brave, my dear. Remember I also have something to bear in losing you.'

Phyllis, so bidden, left the table, and throwing herself at her mother's feet buried her face in her lap.

'Oh, mother, mother, he kissed me!' she cried, and broke into a fit of sobbing.

'Who kissed you?' her mother asked bewildered; 'and when?'

'He—he—Louis did; this morning in the garden,' the girl gasped hysterically.

Mrs. Eve smiled compassionately. After all it

was no very grave matter that was disturbing her daughter's composure.

'Well, well,' she answered, in a soothing voice, stroking the girl's bright head, 'that was not very terrible. He has kissed you before, and he is to be your husband, you know.'

'Yes; but, mother, he never kissed me like that before. Oh, you don't know. It seemed to burn into my cheek. I think he must— Oh, mother, do you think he had been drinking?'

'How foolish you are, Phyllis, and unjust, dear. It is only that he loves you so much.'

'Oh, mother! Is that love? Did my dear, noble father love you like that, and ever kiss you so that you hated him and could have killed him?'

'But, my child, you could not feel like that if you cared for him.'

'I don't. I don't. I liked him when he was different, but I hate him now. And I can't—I won't—I never will marry him!'

It is impossible to say how long the argument might not have lasted had not an interruption at that moment put an abrupt termination to it, for just then a figure passed the window, a knock sounded upon the door, and the Marquis stepped into the room.

## CHAPTER III.

Make yourself an honest man, and then you may be sure that there is one rascal less in the world.

AS may readily be supposed, the Marquis had not been flattered by his bride's reception of him that morning. 'The silly child,' he said peevishly, 'does she think herself a little goddess that one may not kiss her?'

He did not realise the extent to which he had alarmed her. He did not know how far his uncontrol had shown her the gulf between their natures, casting across her young soul the shadows of his irregular life.

A materialist and man of the world, his creed had been to extract all possible amusement and enjoyment from existence. Possessed of a large fortune, he had, from youth upwards, devoted himself to the pursuit of worldly and unworthy pleasures, and it was not wonderful if these had not particularly fitted him to mate with a young

girl, the white pages of whose life grew whiter and more luminous with the unfolding of her nature. He regarded the fear and repulsion she had suddenly shown as being merely symptoms of girlish ignorance and reserve, and beyond a little temporary annoyance, did not greatly concern himself thereat.

But he determined to humour her, and, having dressed carefully, he assumed his wonted courtly air and started out to regain his bride's confidence.

He made his appearance at that moment when Phyllis lay abandoned to her dread of him, with eyes wet and hot with tears, her hair tumbled passionately over her face, her hands locked one in another as she entreated her mother against him.

On his entrance she rose quickly, regarding him with glances of questioning fear. The glances reassured her somewhat. Here was no remnant of the crude coarseness she had detected in him. Here was no sign of the uncouth lover, whose kiss had so repelled her. Here, in his place, was the courteous, kind, old Marquis, bearing in one hand a diamond-laden morocco case, in the other a bouquet of beautiful flowers.

Having saluted Mrs. Eve, he advanced and took Phyllis's trembling hand.

'My dear,' he said, in suave, seductive tones, 'I



startled you this morning, I came so suddenly upon you ; thinking to surprise and please you, I succeeded only in alarming you. See, I have brought you something to make up for my *gaucherie*.'

He opened the leather case, showing a magnificent necklet of diamonds. Very few women fear the *Danaos, dona ferentes*, and, despite the world's strictures, their pleasure at the Danaian gift is as often tender as it is mercenary. Poor Phyllis, in girlish delight, laid down the white flowers with one hand, and took up the jewels with the other, a fact which must certainly have occasioned some delight to the Marquis's friend, Mephisto (who doubtless stood near), affording him opportunity for a cynical sneer at the poor Marguerite.

'Thank you, Louis,' Phyllis faltered. 'Are they for me, my very own?'

He deftly and gracefully cast them over her head, letting them fall round her slender throat.

'For you, my little queen, in honour of to-day.'

He delicately kissed her finger-tips. The thrill again went through her at the touch of his lips. Even at that moment, had she dared, beneath his gaze, dominant though mild, she would have snatched away her hand and torn the jewels off.

But she was tired—exhausted. The long morning, her continued excitement and fasting con-

dition all combined to weaken her will, and, moreover, the habit of childish deference and obedience towards him, which had grown with her years, made her fear to vex him.

Nevertheless, she found courage for a last appeal.

‘Oh, do not let us be married to-day,’ she pleaded. ‘I cannot leave mother. I cannot bear to go so far away alone.’

‘Alone!’ he echoed, while no very amiable expression showed in his eyes. ‘Do you count me as no one?’

‘Oh, let it be put off,’ she entreated.

‘My dear child,’ he said coldly, ‘you will please get your frock on. Mr. Heath will be here shortly, and you would scarcely like him to see you in your present condition.’

‘Come, Phyllis,’ her mother added; ‘I cannot allow you to be foolish any longer.’

The poor girl felt herself friendless. Even her mother was leagued against her. She looked from the one to the other, helplessly, hopelessly, but neither showed her any sign of sympathy. With a submission born of exhaustion and despair she suffered her mother to lead her away. During the process of her simple toilette she remained speechless and impassive. This wedding of hers, the pleasant aspect of which had changed so

grievously within a short space, seemed to her dazed mind to be an execution from which it was as impossible for her to escape as for a criminal to free himself from the hangman.

Oh, if the ceiling would but fall, she prayed heaven, and leave her crushed and lifeless on her white bed. But neither the heavens nor the ceiling were destined to descend upon her at that opportune moment, and she dressed in unwelcome security. Her bridal toilette finished, she went down to the small sitting-room where her fate was to be sealed ; for De Richeville, having no fancy to form a centre of interest for gaping 'hinds,' as Devon still calls her village population, had obtained a special licence in order that the ceremony might take place in the cottage.

Here, in the presence of her mother and their old servant, Phyllis Eve was indissolubly united to the Marquis de Richeville, and the clergyman impressively, in the silence of the little room, forbade any man to put asunder these two whom 'God had joined together.'

It was over at last. The bright gold ring was on her finger, though her hand shrank fearsomely when the bridegroom placed it there.

The clergyman offered his congratulations and left. Her mother kissed her tenderly. Her new-made husband kissed her. Then a rush of sound-

ing waters flooded her sense, her head swam, her knees swayed, and like an overwhelming torrent a sudden weakness loosened the reins of her control, and she fell fainting on the floor.

## CHAPTER IV

For what is wedlock forced, but a hell,  
An age of discord and continual strife ?

ON regaining consciousness our poor bride found herself lying upon her bed in her little room. For a time her returning senses, which showed her the well-known surroundings, brought no other knowledge to her. Downstairs she could hear the sounds of footsteps, which passed to and fro as if in everyday domestic occupation ; outside the opened window the song and chatter of the birds, the soft lifting of the leaves, and their rustle one upon the other as the lively wind whispered its news to them, struck upon her ears familiarly.

She had heard such yesterday and the day before, and on the many other summer mornings to which she had awakened in her cottage chamber.

An under-running consciousness of something unwonted having taken place slowly made itself felt, as the murmur of running water will gradually steal upon our notice, after passing unheeded

though we have stood long beside it; yet she was not sure but that the something which it seemed to her had happened, had not happened in a dream.

The cells of her brain, which had taken cognisance of the morning's events, had been so strongly stimulated, that exhaustion succeeded on excitement, and languidly inert they no longer sent their quota to the general consciousness.

She felt strangely tired, her limbs ached with a leaden heaviness. Had it not been for the bright sunlight streaming in through the window, and the sounds which stirred below, she would have been sure she had waked too early, the sense of fatigue giving rise to an impression that she had not had her sleep out.

She turned over with a sigh of dreamy langour, intending to take a short last half-hour of slumber, when a ray of the sunshine glinted all at once upon the new ring encircling her finger. The sudden brilliant gleaming flashed through her eyes right into her brain, and there woke up the sleeping cells that linked the continuity of her consciousness.

In a moment she knew all. The kiss in the garden, which had so repelled and terrified her, the ceremony that had sounded like a doom, and then the darkness rushing down upon her. Truly,

truly she had been deceived by the placid murmurings of nature, the sights and echoes which had seemed familiar. There had been nothing in all her recollection one little bit like this. Years seemed to have passed since that meeting with the Marquis in the garden.

With all the memories that leapt up swiftly in her mind, there came a strong, wild longing to escape, a longing which quickly formulated itself into a determination. No consideration for her disappointed bridegroom, no thought even of her mother, found place amid the fears and fancies which, like phantoms, passed hurried and disordered through her brain.

Only to escape. To free herself at once and forever from a bondage which had in a moment shown itself hateful and impossible.

She felt like one who, walking in calm sunshine, had suddenly been enveloped by lurid flame and smoke, which the earth he trusted sent full into his face. The poor girl's excited mind terribly exaggerated her fears.

She lay quiet upon her bed, devising and reviewing plans. She would go to London, she determined finally. No one would find her there. A brief visit, made with her parents some six years previously, had shown the city to her as a vast chaotic wilderness, an interminable maze, so

thronged with numbers and varieties of persons, that one could be easily and irretrievably lost in it. She did not decide very definitely as to what she would do there, but she reflected vaguely that so immense and busy a place could not fail to afford her occupation. She could be a governess to young children, or, if it came to that, a nurse. She was a good needlewoman, and might do sewing for some large shop. Or she might, like the vicar's daughter, enter a hospital and tend sick people.

Various methods for earning her bread rose readily to her thought, and she passed them lightly in review, with the easy confidence of youth which calmly formulates the facts of life according to its faith and fancy.

Any reflection, that the ceremony in which she had taken part bound her by a solemn obligation, at no time impressed her.

No power, human or divine, she was assured, could make hers one with the nature which had suddenly revealed itself to her.

Love is such a wild, sweet, wayward creature that not all the forces of heredity, self-interest and custom can transform it into a tame domestic thing which clings inevitably to the hand that feeds it.

In healthy unspoiled hearts it still retains its qualities of wilful blindness and sublime insanity,



though these more often than not lead it into the world's thorny ways and byeways, wherein it perisheth miserably.

The foreshadowing of such an inherent madness was at that moment looming up in Phyllis's consciousness, urging her to exchange the assured comfort and luxury of her newly-acquired position for probable hardship and struggle, to throw off in a moment class and family tradition,—to reject the obedience and training of her lifetime.

The keen excitement, quickening her mental powers, brought to the surface faculties which had hitherto lain dormant, placing at her disposal latent resources of perception and strength of purpose. Her quiet unstimulated life had stored reserves of mind and body which, now first called upon, answered to her need.

As she lay thinking rapidly, making her plans with a calm clear-headedness born of the sobering force of her necessity, she was grateful for the time afforded by her temporary weakness. Not long, she knew, would she be permitted to rest thus quietly.

She and her bridegroom were to be conveyed by an afternoon train to London *en route* for Paris. That honeymoon, that brief, bright entry into the world of wonders, to which she had looked for-

ward, she dared not now consider, the thought so terrified and unnerved her. Had the aristocratic, handsome old Marquis suddenly developed hoof and horns, her horror of him could not have been greater.

Her mother came in presently.

‘How are you now, dear?’ she asked, seeing the girl’s eyes open and her expression more natural. ‘I left you, thinking you would be better alone. My poor Phyllis, I cannot tell you how grieved I am for you. But be brave, dear. You will soon be at home with me again.’

‘I am better now, mother,’ Phyllis answered, in a half-strangled voice. ‘How much time—have I?’

‘You mean before the train goes? Louis is coming for you at two. I advised him to leave us alone for the little time we have together.’

‘What time is it now?’

‘Now? It is half-past eleven.’

‘Mother, will you let Maggie get me some food, and then I will like to go into the garden for a while. My head is very hot, and the fresh air will do me good. And, mother, will you leave me alone? I will come down soon.’

‘I will get you something myself, dear. Oh, Phyllis,’ looking into her daughter’s eyes and haggard face, ‘why did you not tell me? You

seemed to look forward to your marriage, and I thought you were fond of him. But it will come back, dear, never fear. It is only the strangeness that frightens you.'

Phyllis made no answer. It could not be that this dread which filled her every fibre was but foolishness. But she knew there was nothing to be gained by further discussion.

She lay back upon her pillow, and her mother presently left her. Then she rose hurriedly and locked the door, swaying and almost falling in the faintness and trembling of her limbs. With unsteady feet she passed to and fro in the little room, collecting, from the trunk which held her modest trousseau, such simple necessities as she thought she would need, and these she packed into a small satchel. She took from her purse four sovereigns out of five—the price of the little gold watch, her father's wedding gift to his wife, which the exigencies of her daughter's position had induced Mrs. Eve to part with. One of these she put into her satchel, slipping the others into a hastily pencilled note: 'I shall not need them, darling mother. Keep them, and soon, I hope, I shall be able to send you more to buy back the dear little watch.' She went on to plead pardon and urge the necessity for her desertion. She could never, come what might, she said, bring her-

self to live with the Marquis. The whole thing was so terrible. Why had they made her marry him at the last? She would never see him again, and she would rather die than live with him. She would write soon, and would certainly be able, before long, to send for her mother. She concluded with assurances of affection and duty, all the while hastening preparations for her undutiful flight.

Then she took off her shining wedding ring, and the fine diamond engagement-ring she had grown so fond of, the former with a strong thrill of relief, though its bondage had been so brief, the latter with a throb of regret, its bright brilliancy had so interwoven itself with her girlish hopes and dreamings. She placed them, with the following note, in an envelope which she addressed to De Richeville.

‘Please forgive me, though I am behaving very badly to you. But you will find it is for the best. I don’t think we should ever suit, because I did not know you, and always thought you different from what you seemed this morning. And it would be a terrible thing not to love my husband. It will be best for you to get a divorce from me, because I shall never come back to you. I hope you will be happy, and thank you for all your

kindness. I am very grateful, but I am sure we should not suit one another, so it is best to part at once. Mother doesn't know about my going. Please don't try to find me out, because I really never, never could come back to you.—Your sincere friend,  
PHYLLIS EVE.'

Whence it will be evident that 'Phyllis Eve,' as she still signed herself, despite the fact that she had an hour earlier irrevocably subscribed herself Phyllis de Richeville, was as little versed in legal technicality and human motive as she was in the art of letter-writing. But whatsoever were the literary defects of this production, it may well be imagined its recipient did not stay to criticise these. Howsoever lofty in style and elegant in character the communication might have been, it is to be supposed it could not have greatly commended itself to the taste of her bridegroom who had to take it in lieu of his young bride.

## CHAPTER V.

He knew not what to say, and so he swore !

HAVING packed her bundle, and pencilled her letters, Phyllis, in the innocence of her simplicity, felt she had conscientiously and satisfactorily explained herself, and with a lighter heart descended presently to her repast. It would never do, she was assured, to be longer without food. Already the energy of her determination seemed to be oozing from her finger-ends ; she began to feel so weak.

The enormity of the desertion she was planning failed to strike her. It appeared to her that a continuance of the contract she had entered into would be the worst of all possible conclusions to it. She was confident that she did but her duty to herself and her new-made husband, in renouncing straightforwardly all further relation with him.

Doubtless the informality of a home-wedding had robbed the ceremony of some of its impres-

siveness. Had it been performed in church, it would have acquired a solemnity which under present circumstances it did not possess. Nothing seemed to her more terrible and impossible than that she should not love her husband. And nothing could make her love her husband, she thought, since he had so revealed himself to her.

She had seen but little of the world, and had had no girl-friends, who might have taught her more conventional views of things.

She had heard of divorce as coming to the relief of ill-mated couples, and, in her childish disposition of the difficulties that beset her, she considered this a simple and an eminently practical way out of them.

De Richeville, she thought, might then, if he so wished, marry someone else.

But she—she would never again marry. Her one experience should be final. She would live as Diana did, and, like her, die in dignified maidenhood.

So she sat down, with almost a smile upon her lips, and ate her luncheon with so determined and apparently well-pleased an appetite that her mother, watching her, was reassured. Nevertheless, she fully recognised the necessity for not meeting with the Marquis. She had misgivings lest he should not be willing to accept her solution

of the situation, and she feared to anger him or give him an opportunity of bringing his forces of will and determination to bear upon her.

It was possible he could compel her to live with him, and she felt too young and helpless to openly defy and deny him.

He would soon grow reconciled to her plan; after the first annoyance was over he would recognise the practicability of the arrangement.

But she did not dare to face his first discovery.

She knew there was a train to London at a quarter to one, and this she determined to take, so that she would be well upon her way before her flight should be detected.

The clock struck twelve as she finished her meal. She rose and put on her hat.

‘I will go with you into the garden, Phyllis,’ Mrs. Eve said. ‘It will be the last time for months, dear.’

Phyllis’s heart and conscience smote her at the tremble in her mother’s voice and at the pale, worn face that turned to her pathetically.

‘Let me be alone, mother,’ she answered hesitantly, and she dropped her white lids over her honest eyes. But indeed she must save herself. Might she not tell one little lie in order to escape the life of falsehood and shame which lay in the straight path?

‘I shall be better left to myself,’ she went on. ‘I



want to say good-bye to the dear old garden. So good-bye to you for a while, mother ; good-bye, dear little mother.'

And with a sudden break-down of her courage she kissed her mother hastily and ran out of the room.

'I may not cry. I must force it back. I must be strong,' she kept repeating, fighting against the emotion that rushed wildly to her throat, as if to strangle her resolution and herself.

Down the small garden path she went, unheeding the roses that raised their red, sweet faces and tossed her a scented welcome, down into the old orchard where the apple's lovely bloom had dwindled to the small, green growing sphere, as young fair hopes shrink to the routine of common duty, to ripen presently into the goodly fruit of wholesome life ; down past the little brook, where clusters of wild forget-me-nots crowded, looking like the blue bright eyes of the babbling water down past the gate which led into De Richeville's beautiful park, hers that day, if she so willed it ; but, in her maiden independence, she would share nothing with him with whom she could not share her heart.

She would never again go into his garden, not even now for a moment to bid adieu to her friend Diana, whose white, cold feet she had so often

kissed, for Momus was there—Momus with the wicked leer, carved wide upon his stone lips, and with Momus was the memory of her bridegroom's first caress.

The recollection, as she shrank frightened past the open gate, put fresh energy into her limbs and she hurried on, passing behind every hedge, or tree, or wall which gave her even momentary cover. She had forgotten her little satchel and dared not now go back for it. Even at that moment her mother or Maggie might have found it, and with it, the letters that disclosed her flight. She had locked the door of her room, and slipped the key on her mother's dressing-table, and it was possible that this might already have been sought and used to force her secret.

Only let her be once in the train and all would be well, but a hundred things might happen ere she reached and left the station.

Her haste but increased her fears, the hurried pace exciting and exaggerating them. The road she went was lonely, only an occasional countryman, or a group of children, idling from school, meeting her, but it was the carriage-road from the Castle, and she trembled lest the Marquis, anticipating the time agreed upon, should suddenly drive into view. The sound of approaching wheels scared her into a hedge, into the shelter of

a barn or haystack, and once into the churchyard, where she laid herself panting upon the grass, under shadow of the wall, beside a new-made grave.

But in no one of these cases were the wheels those she feared, and though her terrors nowise lessened, she reached the station without having met anyone who knew her, or at least who knew her as that morning's bride.

Her efforts of avoidance had so delayed her that the bell announcing the immediate arrival of the train was sounding as she entered the station.

In terror she fled to the booking-office.

'A ticket to London, please,' she gasped.

Oh, how slow the man was, and with what attention and suspicion he seemed to scan her heated face!

'A single ticket, or a return ticket? A first, second or third?' he inquired deliberately, all the time looking hard at her, as she thought with distrust, but it was probably only because the countenance which peered so anxiously through his small window, was so much more comely than were those of the bucolic class he was in the habit of reviewing.

'Oh, not a return,' she said hastily; 'and I will take a second-class ticket.'

'One pound, seven shillings and sixpence,' he announced.

Phyllis stood dismayed. She possessed only the sovereign she had put into her purse, and two 'jubilee shillings.'

'Oh, will you change it, please, for a third class. I have not brought enough money.'

'One pound and sixpence,' he said shortly.

She put down her sovereign and one of her shillings, and caught up the ticket. Then, without waiting for change, fled hastily on to the platform, for the train at that moment rushed, pompous and panting, into the station, as though it had not a moment of its precious time to waste upon belated passengers.

'Summat up there,' soliloquised the booking-clerk. 'Summat wrong, I reckon. Gells doan't leave sixpennies behind 'em, 'specially when sixpennies seems scarce, if there ain't summat wrong. Happen us shall hear of she in the papers. A pretty lookin' maid, too.'

He heard of her again in less time than, and in a manner different from that he had anticipated, when, in little more than an hour, he had the satisfaction of describing herself and her departure to her infuriated bridegroom, who was far too incensed to reward the man for his sympathetic interest and valuable information.

'If I'd a' known he 'udn't a' stumped up, danged if I'd a' told he nothing,' the latter concluded, as

he wiped a moist forehead, drew his hand across a dry mouth, and disappeared again into his ticket cupboard.

Meanwhile, the Marquis, with a pale, angry face, drove to the nearest station whence he could be put in telegraphic communication with the London terminus.

Having effected this, he felt more comfortable than he had done since that moment when Mrs. Eve had tremblingly given him Phyllis's pencilled note and his discarded rings. As luck would have it, he was in time to catch the half-past two up-train, and occupied in solitude and mortified rage the first-class carriage he had ordered to be reserved for himself and his newly-wedded wife.

The Marquis de Richeville was not the kind of man to be played with.

There was something feline in his purring, soft civility, and he was even still more cat-like when he showed his claws.

His generally smooth temper and manner sprang from an innate love of peace, but those who were persuaded thereby into believing him to be a man of kindly heart and feeling, succeeded in reaching that acme of earthly happiness which we are told consists in being well-deceived.

Any who were so deluded might have extended their knowledge of human nature somewhat—if,

indeed, a knowledge of human nature be encompassed by the horizon of its shortcomings—could they have accompanied him upon this particular journey.

For, enabled by virtue of a golden key to lock the doors of solitude upon himself, he proceeded forthwith to people that same solitude with angry, peevish passions, setting loose these denizens of his soul to bark and bite about him until such time as, conscious of the world's eye again upon him, he should strain their leash and draw them back to their intimate, secret hiding-places.

During his journey a phantom werewolf, clad in a nineteenth century suit of decent black, and holding in its grasp a roll of judicial parchment, passed and repassed like a familiar spirit before the Marquis's gaze, every now and again showing from beneath its civilised dress, livid, corpse-like fingers, as the angry, pale old man registered in legal language his vow to constrain the tender maiden to his will.

His bride's sudden repulsion had rent some holes in the garment of his vanity, giving him strange unwelcome glimpses of the man beneath—the man from whom the young girl had shrunk, crying and dismayed.

With a shiver, he shrugged his shoulders Frenchly, and drew the rent raiment tighter

across his breast, covering the shrivelled bareness of the region about his heart.

The girl was his, the law had made her his.

It was ridiculous, monstrous that he should be daunted by a child's defiance. He would be a laughing-stock to the world, to himself, if he let this runaway bride escape him.

But he was not much concerned as to the ultimate of her escapade, though the annoying circumstances in their course disturbed him. She deserved, indeed, to be well whipped, and, had it been feasible and befitting her dignity as his wife, he would certainly have handed her over in anticipation to suitable authorities, who might inflict a severe punishment for her dereliction.

He settled himself as comfortably as his vexation and the circumstances permitted, and gazing with unheeding eye at the lovely nature-pictures which the rapid steam-flight focussed upon his retina, consoled himself with the assurance that the annoyance would reach its end with the termination of that tedious, interminable journey.

His telegram had been sufficiently definite, and his position would accentuate the imperative nature of his message :—

‘Stop a young lady from Dilby, dressed in grey, travelling alone, without luggage.’

He mentally sketched the frightened captive, kept in solitary, uncomfortable durance for the space of some four hours, and flattered himself that she would be ready, by the time he arrived, to welcome a friendly face, and submit herself obediently and gladly to his keeping.

In a cold, retributive anger, it pleased him to picture the terrified up-look of her large eyes, when the railway official possibly put his hand on her arm and bade her go with him.

It would be worse than my kiss, he reflected with a laugh. My Lady Disdain would certainly shrug her pretty shoulders, and shake off the masculine grasp with a fine air.

And then her lonely detention in some waiting-room or foreman's office, would give her time to come to her senses, doubtless to grow hungry, and she would be only too content to exchange such distasteful captivity for the refined comfort of the rooms and dinner he had ordered at the hotel.

She would be more ready to sue for forgiveness, he assured himself harshly, mentally contrasting the dull loneliness of his ride with the pleasant, interested society in which he had thought to take it, than he would be to forgive.

He would read her a short, sharp lesson upon her duties, lest she so mistake herself and him again. No consideration for her young helpless-



ness ; no pity for her in her girlish distress softened his resentment. In all ways he was giving equivalent more than a hundredfold to this penniless child for her pretty face, and she should show him a proper and becoming gratitude.

To very few girls fell such a stroke of luck as this marriage of hers. By it she was raised all at once from circumstances of poverty and obscurity, to a position of wealth, luxury and distinction, and instead of showing due appreciation of such rare opportunities, she fled them like a fool.

With such reflections and much mental irritation, De Richeville came at last to his journey's end, and if our sympathies have been any way enlisted on the side of the fugitive bride, anticipation sinks to zero as we alight with the pursuing bridegroom, and hear the station-master answer glibly to his peremptory question,—

‘Yes, my lord ! We stopped her by the last train. Much distressed, your lordship. This way, if you please.’

‘And so she ought to be distressed, confound her,’ growled the impatient Benedict, as he followed the brisk, uniformed figure of his guide.

## CHAPTER VI.

One struggle more and I am free !

WHEN Phyllis plunged headlong, and in terror lest she should be left behind, into a third-class smoking-carriage, whence we last saw the disappearing flutter of her grey skirts, she disturbed the composure of two young men, who had with considerable care, and more than one eye to their comfort, ranged their length upon opposite seats of the carriage, and lay lazily smoking and talking. Her hasty incursion acted somewhat after the fashion of a bombshell, for each young man started bolt upright, removed his pipe spasmodically, and stared from either side at the intruder. 'Bother women,' was their mental anathema upon the threatened termination to their ease, 'can't they let us have even the smoking-carriages? It ought to be put down by law. Deuce take it !'

The younger, and consequently the bolder, for experience makes us timid of treading on our

neighbours' toes, remarked in a somewhat ag-grieved tone,—

‘Pardon me, but do you know that this is a smoking carriage?’

‘Is it?’ Phyllis remarked, with a bewildered air. ‘Must I get out?’

She was quite unused to travelling, perhaps not half a dozen journeys were registered in her memory, where, indeed, so few events of any kind had marked themselves, and on these occasions her mother had been her pilot. Therefore, her views upon her individual prerogatives and those of her fellow-passengers were somewhat vague.

‘Oh, don’t unless you wish it,’ the young man made answer. ‘Only, I thought perhaps you might object to smoking, you know.’

‘I think I do,’ she replied, rising quickly and making for the door. ‘Shall I have time?’

Then, without waiting for a reply, in her excitement and fear of transgressing, not noticing that the guard had whistled and the engine was sending forth sundry grunts and panting steam puffs preparatory to getting its heavy burden under weigh, she put one foot upon the step, preparing to alight.

The elder of the travellers, both of whom were mollified upon finding that the girl’s intrusion was

an error of inexperience and not an assertion of feminine rights, laid his hand civilly upon her arm and drew her back into the carriage.

‘It is too late, you would lose the train,’ he said kindly. ‘We will not smoke,’ and he quietly extinguished his pipe and laid it on the window sill.

She would have protested against this sacrifice upon the altar of her comfort, but there was a decision in the stranger’s tone, a directness in the glance of his dark eyes, which disposed finally of the subject.

She thanked him, and went over to an opposite corner, where she sat down mutely, tired out by the exertions of the morning.

The younger of her fellow-passengers, anxious to atone for his hasty interference, inquired now very courteously as to her wishes regarding the windows, whether she would have them up or down, or one up and the other down, or one half-way up? He awaited her reply with marked interest.

‘Please put them as you like,’ she answered wearily, with a youthful wonder that people can concern themselves about trifles, when, to her, life seemed so full of big events.

The young man hesitated. No answer places its recipient in a dilemma so difficult as that which throws upon him the onus of arranging for

another, while it vouchsafes no indication whatsoever as to that other's possible views upon the subject.

His friend again came to the rescue. With a quick eye he measured his fair neighbour's height as she sat quite uninterested in these details, then raised the window a little above her level that the air might enter and yet not drive directly upon her.

Having done this, he settled himself again in his corner and took up a book.

He had scarcely had time to become absorbed in its pages, when his companion, who had been stealing admiring glimpses of the girl's fine, delicate profile, which showed like a faint, pink-tinted cameo against the background of passing country trod gently on his foot, and intimated to his lifted, inquiring eyes that something was wrong with their fellow-passenger.

He—and it will be more convenient to disclose his name now, than at that later period of the story when he is to be formally presented to the reader—Paul Liveing glanced quietly whither his cousin, Geoffry Dene, indicated, and perceived that Phyllis, forgetting everything but the one great emotion of the hour, had lost all thought of concealment, and laying her face upon her hands, was weeping hysterically.

'Can't you say something, old man? Try and cheer her up, poor little girl. You will do it better than I could,' Geoffry leant forward and whispered.

Liveing, for answer, silently took from his bag two newspapers. One of these he thrust into Geoffry's hand, the other he opened to its widest limit, and buried himself bodily, and to all appearance mentally, in its contents.

Geoffry accepted the hint and followed the other's example, only glancing occasionally from under his lids at the progress of the maiden's grief.

Phyllis, coming presently to herself and attaining a gradual diminuendo of her sobs, was greatly relieved to find that the strangers in the opposite corners had been too immensely absorbed in their papers to notice her.

It was such a terrible breach of manners to cry like a child in a public railway-carriage. But she was consoled to find that her misdemeanour had passed unobserved.

She had been so concentrated upon her miseries that she did not hear young Dene, with chivalrous consideration for her condition, and boyish bravado, boldly deny all other passengers from station to station the right of entry.

Some he advised confidentially, and with an

exaggerated considerateness, to avoid that particular carriage as he had himself but just recovered from an attack of cholera—a fabrication which his sturdiness and obtrusive health might have quickly demolished, had not a fear of infection made cowards of all.

According to the temperament of his hearers, he was timidly thanked for his timely warning, or was informed, in more or less heated language, that he ought to be ashamed of himself for travelling in a condition dangerous to others, while more than one of his dupes swore terrible oaths that ere the sun had set they would write to the *Times*.

However, if hell be paved with good intentions, its fires may possibly be kindled by projected, threatened, never-despatched letters to the papers, and these, which Geoffry's dupes relieved their indignation by planning, doubtless went towards the further increase of its everlasting flames, for I do not remember to have had my breakfast disturbed by their awful perusal.

At each station whence a raid was attempted, Geoffry, with delighted ingenuity, set up a barricade, with the result that they travelled uninterrupted all the way, but long ere they reached their destination Phyllis had dried her eyes, and was wondering, with a beating heart, whither she should turn, what she should do, when she should be bereft

of this friendly shelter of the railway, which her last sovereign had secured.

London, which had recently appeared as a shadowy yet certain haven, now seemed to be a somewhat appalling reality.

The panoramic possibilities of employment which had played across her excited mental retina, as a swift succession of bright and rosy pictures, lost their fulness of form and colouring, and began to shrink to somewhat meagre proportions, as the metropolis, under an aspect of foggy haze, now obtruded itself in the rears of wretched tenements and squalid back-gardens, which, lining the railway looked like so many ill-kept rabbit-hutches.

She got passing glimpses of sickly, hopeless girl-faces, faces of girls no older than herself, who sat in dreary rooms and strained their eyes to see and sew ; glimpses of lonely babies looking joylessly from dingy windows, dulled and quiet under the crushing conviction that it is useless to cry when there is nothing to be got by crying—that most terrible of baby-philosophies ; pictures of old men and women, starved and distorted, who grip greedily ‘the ills they know of,’ because the Providence which has meted out the meagre measure of their lives has not commended itself sufficiently to their confidence, to justify them in hoping that there exists anywhere a state of things where



the lambs are not shorn and the winds untempered, and, after all, the crust you have in your hand is better than the promise of a hundred loaves.

Phyllis gazed at the wilderness of roofs and chimney-pots, irregularly intersected by narrow streets, looking altogether like a vast, dingy maze, out of whose intricate, dreary complexities, no human soul might ever find its way back to the beautiful, wholesome country, or up into God's air and sunshine.

Despite her energy and hopefulness, and the warm sultriness of the season, she shivered with a chill of misty premonition, as she closely and with appealing eyes scanned the visage of this stony-hearted stepmother.

The train stayed once upon a bridge, and, looking into the street beneath, whence came up a roar of unceasing traffic, the treadmill of toil which grinds out the bread of the poor, she noted with dismay the bewildering rapid passage of haggard human beings, the crowded vehicles, the strife of rough men, the ragged, dirty children who ran in and out with shrill laughter, the coarse play of a band of work-girls gathered at a street-corner. She turned faint with terror.

Never would she dare, she thought, go down into the midst of it ; never could she trust herself into

those crowded streets ; she could not face the bold stare and comment of those rough girls.

She had time to indulge her fears before the train went on, when, with a feeling of intense relief, she found that this alarming spot was not her immediate destination.

Yet, despite her misgivings and the sinking at her heart, where the foothold of her hopes seemed like an uncertain, tottering abyss, she at no time admitted a thought of return. Though her courage sank, like lead, into the bottomless pit of her fears, she would not catch at the substantial security of her bridegroom's protection.

If she was weak and wavering in the gaze she sent forward, she was steadfast and firm in that she threw back. No privation or hardship which might come upon her, could be so terrible as the luxurious comfort that her wedded life assured.

The dread of it gave her strength and spurred her flight.

By the time the train rolled into the terminus, she was eager to escape into its crowded space, in order to lose her identity, though she cast one anxious, comprehensive glance upon the faces turned to the incoming locomotive, fearful lest, by some means, her husband could have preceded, and be now waiting for her. But as he was then at a distance of some hundred miles, amusing

himself coldly with the notion of her capture, she was safe from him, personally.

The argus-eyed stationmaster, whom, by the magic thrill of electric touch, he had transformed into his representative, was an unsuspected terror.

So she stepped out on to the platform, almost cheerfully, assisted by the ready hand of Mr. Geoffry, whose interest in his beautiful, tearful fellow-passenger, had not at all waned during the long journey.

Modern civilisation forbids its men to be kind, or even very civil, to unprotected damsels, even when distressed, but Geoffry Dene was too impulsive and warm-hearted a member of society to be able to clip his instincts to strictly conventional trim, so he lingered near the lonely girl, until such time as her friends should claim her, somewhat to the vexation of his cousin who, more conventional, feared lest Phyllis should be offended.

But Phyllis was too unversed in the world's ways, to suppose she might err in accepting a stranger's kindness, even though that stranger were a man, and she was grateful to the warm-hearted youth who asked so kindly if he might be of use.

'I am not sure yet where I am going,' she answered truthfully, and a little hesitatingly. 'You are very kind, but please do not mind me ; I shall be able to manage very well.'

And, with a smile and a little bow, she walked on.

She had not proceeded far when a tall man, clad in railway uniform, stopped and interrogated her.

‘I beg pardon, miss, but may I ask what station you came from?’

Phyllis trembled at this unexpected challenge.

There is always something impressive in officialism. An uniformed individual is able to assume proportions a hundred times more alarming than are possible to one ordinarily clad.

‘I came from Dilby,’ she answered, turning frightened eyes upon the man’s face.

‘I am sorry,’ he said civilly, ‘but I have orders to detain you.’

‘Oh, it must be a mistake,’ she cried. ‘You must please let me go.’

She made a hurried movement forward.

Then the man, still very civil, laid his hand upon her shoulder.

‘Excuse me,’ he insisted. ‘I must obey orders. If it is a mistake, it will soon be cleared up.’

‘Oh, what shall I do?’ she asked herself distressedly. ‘What can I say to make him let me go? I will never be caught. I will never go back.’

She turned instinctively to the traveller who

had already shown himself so kind, and who now lingered in passing.

Surely he would befriend and help her to escape.

The terrified appeal of her eyes brought the impetuous youth to her side.

‘I say, what is this?’ he demanded sturdily of the civil official. ‘What the deuce are you interfering with this lady for?’

‘Excuse me,’ was the reply, ‘but I can’t see, sir, how you are concerned. My orders were to stop this lady, and I am obeying my orders. If you interfere with me in the execution of my duty—’

‘Execution of your duty be hanged!’ Geoffrey interrupted. ‘Perhaps—’ with a sudden inspiration and an amused glance at the captive—‘Perhaps you don’t know that this lady is my sister. We have just come in from Devon. And perhaps you will explain, how the deuce it comes to be your duty to seize upon her like this.’

The man removed his detaining hand as if he had been shot. Evidently he had made a mistake. This was no solitary runaway.

This lady, though she wore grey, was travelling apparently with two gentlemen, unmistakably gentlemen, as their dress and the amount and character of their luggage, which stood by in the

care of a porter, and, moreover, the high and hectoring tone assumed by the one who had spoken, proved them.

There is nothing officialism fears more than officialism, and the uniformed individual at that moment conjured up a vision of himself in the custody of another uniformed individual, whose broadcloth and buttons, if not equally ornamental, or appertaining to so high a social rank, yet held a more authoritative warranty.

‘I am extremely sorry, sir,’ he apologised hastily. ‘I beg your pardon, miss, but I made the mistake in the execution of my duty, and I trust you’ll look over it.’

Some other solitary damsel, gowned in grey, at that moment caught his eye, and confident of being right this time, he shot away to interrogate and capture her, as she appeared, in his biassed vision. to be attempting a hurried escape.

Thus it happened that, while the real culprit went free, an unlucky substitute was secured, and, despite her entreaties and asseverations of innocence, was held in vile durance, until De Richeville turned up, and then the triumphant civil official was furiously cursed for his error and his pains.

So Phyllis was temporarily rescued by Geoffry’s good-natured *ruse*.

Had he stayed to consider these, her bearing and manner, while under his notice, might have shown as being distinctly open to suspicion, but it was his habit to act first and reflect afterwards, and to this much-condemned habit Phyllis owed her liberty, and indirectly the trials and difficulties which beset her later.

‘How good you have been. I can never thank you enough,’ she said, with glistening eyes, as she parted presently from him. ‘They had no right to stop me. I had explained everything. Good-bye, and I do thank you so much.’

Then, before the young man had time to answer, she turned and walked quickly away.

‘There goes my fate,’ he cried tragically to Liveing, who stood by, half-admiring him for his ready chivalry, half-blaming him for what, after all, might be misplaced sympathy.

‘What a Quixote you are, Geoff,’ he remarked impatiently, as Dene followed him with laggard steps, and sundry glances turned after his *protégée’s* retreating form. The fineness of the evening had tempted them to walk, leaving their luggage to be sent on.

‘You will get yourself into a scrape one day. How do you know that your fate, as you call her, had not justly brought *her* fate upon herself, in the shape of that official clutch? How do you

know you have not aided and abetted the escape of a serious culprit?’

‘With *those* eyes,’ Geoff said scornfully, his handsome nostrils dilating contemptuously upon the ignorance of human nature displayed by his companion. Young people are apt to read their own idealism into the fine curves and colouring of physical beauty.

‘I know you are a born physiognomist,’ Paul assented with a sly smile, ‘but if the owner of those eyes—print them in capitals as big as you will—if the lovely damsel happen to have taken a fancy to someone else’s property—or even,’ as Geoffry made a sign of annoyed dissent, ‘even if she is eloping from school, I don’t know that you have done a very prudent thing in assisting her to her liberty. In the latter case, were I her irate father, it would give me pleasure to punch your head; in the former, some presiding magistrate will doubtless dispose of you satisfactorily for some greater or lesser length of time!’

‘Stop it,’ Dene cried hotly. ‘What a fellow you are, Paul. Don’t you believe in anything human or divine, and I am sure that girl’s face is more divine than human.’

‘The loveliest face I ever saw, Geoff,’ Paul said sententiously, though with a little sigh, as if he had not let his illusions slip painlessly, ‘was owned by



a woman—I say owned, because she looked upon it in that light, you know—who was as false as her face was beautiful. There isn't much to it, as the Yanks say. Beauty isn't worth much more than the skin it's painted on.'

'Oh! I know all about that,' the other answered, with the lofty consciousness of experience which twenty-three years of wilful illusion and a rosy self-deception had brought him. 'That's true enough about physical beauty, complexion and teeth and that, but there's something more than that. I can't describe it, because I'm not much of a fellow at descriptions, but there's a look in their eyes—'

'There is,' Paul interjected with a twitching at the corners of his mouth, as he put a world of damnatory cynicism into his voice.

'Hang it,' Geoff cried irritably, 'it's no good talking to you. You won't see what I mean. You seem to have gone through the world blind, Paul.'

'Or with glasses that corrected my obliquities.'

'I say, old fellow,' his cousin asked presently, 'you don't mind me asking, you needn't answer you know, but did you—did that handsome, false woman take you in, and is that why you sneer at beauty?'

'I sneer at beauty! How you jump to conclusions, Geoff. Do you think, now, I didn't admire your little friend's fine points as well as yourself?'

‘Was she so awfully fascinating?’

‘Who? Oh, the other woman. She *was* rather!’

‘Were you awfully hard hit?’

Paul laughed.

‘No. Don’t waste your pity. I did not care two straws about her.’

They walked on for a time in silence, Geoffry fully convinced that Liveing had either not told him the truth, or had told him only that portion of it which concealed the most important part.

‘I did not care for her,’ his cousin re-commenced presently; ‘but a friend of mine did—my best and oldest friend, Geoff—and she ruined him. The poor devil was shot in a duel about her. He gave up everything for her—home, family, friends—and married her. Like most of us he didn’t sacrifice himself, seeing his way clear—only women do that. But he shut his eyes, made a plunge, and came to grief on the other side.’

‘What became of her? Is she living?’

‘No, thank goodness; she killed herself at last. She took a good time about it. A woman with the nerves of a tiger, the heart of a frog, and the digestion of a horse, takes a good deal of killing.’

‘And you say she added to her other eccentricities the face of an angel. I should like to have seen her, Paul.’

‘In order to make a fool of yourself like the others,’ Paul said irritably, and with a sudden quickening of his pace, as if he had had enough of the subject, he shot ahead.

His cousin hastened his steps and soon came up with him.

‘Does he think he takes me in?’ he reflected sagely, and with not a little pride in his powers of discernment. ‘Poor fellow, it’s plain enough. He was madly in love with his friend’s beautiful wife!’

But with his native impetuosity, Geoff jumped too far. The story was one of friendship only. Paul had been as indifferent to the guile of the beautiful wife, as he had been cut to the heart by her victim’s tragic end.

## CHAPTER VII.

Escaped?—fled?—vanished, melted into air?  
She's gone! I cannot clutch her!

AFTER parting from her new acquaintance, Phyllis passed quickly up the busy street into which the terminus opens.

The novelty of the unaccustomed scenes and sounds was lost sight of in the concentration of her mind upon one object—that of diving, as quickly as might be, so deep into the city's midst that she should be unfindable.

Such an object is not difficult of attainment in a great city like London, though she knew that in her inexperience and ignorance of her whereabouts, she might unwittingly make for the enemy's camp.

This great hotel, where the snowy napery and shining glass and silver were being placed upon the tables by the bustling waiters, might even be that one in which De Richeville had taken rooms until they should start next day for the Continent.

There some dainty suite of chambers might be

waiting in lonely state for the incoming bridegroom and bride, and, though she was tired out by her long, hot journey and needed rest, the thought that such might be actually awaiting her in the building near, gave strength to her feet, and drove her onward with a keener energy.

Even at that moment her husband might be reaching London, and was it not likely that, as he had already done, he would still further issue orders for her detention.

Jostled and pushed in her rapid, unheeding flight, she soon became conscious of great bodily fatigue.

People wondered, in that casual manner in which busy people do wonder, at the hurrying girl, with her rapt face and fixed look. Her clear skin, with the brown tinge of country health upon it, her bright full eyes, the careless abandon of her curling hair, the quaint fashion of her garden hat, the simple make of her grey gown, all these betokened her recent advent from rusticity, informed the quick London eye thereof, and incited the quick London tongue to comment thereupon.

But Phyllis went her way, as unconscious of the attention she excited as she was ignorant that her spleness and the childlike innocence of her face differed essentially from the sharp intelligence and immature precocity of town-bred minds and features.

Some *gamin* taking in, with cunning glance, the

facts of her rusticity and inexperience, straightway pounced upon her as prey or game for his unoccupied wits, and choosing a space sufficient for the swing of his stunted length, proceeded to 'turn cartwheels' in her path.

But even this device, and the unwonted skill with which he accomplished it, failed to attract her. After vainly displaying for some minutes the great art of which he was master, running before her with either end successively uppermost, and failing thereby to elicit even admiration, to say nothing of coppers, he presently assumed a hostile front, and insolently asked her in the refrain of a slang song, where did she 'git that hat?'

As he pushed his dirty, malicious face right under the rustic breadth of the head-gear he depreciated, Phyllis was compelled to notice the interest so thrust upon her. She quickened her pace, and tried to escape him, wondering if her dress were really countrified and peculiar.

The *gamin*, baffled in his attempt to turn an honest penny by his rotatory efforts, and suffering, doubtless, the pangs of unappreciated merit, now set himself to the task of revenge.

By means of that strange mental telepathy which obtains among his class, there soon came to his aid the ragged unkempt forms of three other of his species, and it was no great tax upon their

combined talents to reduce their victim speedily to an extreme of misery.

The poor girl passed along the street, attended by four young imps of mischief, who evinced a persistent interest in the question of her milliner, in various tones of inquiry and pitches of key, calling public attention to the head-gear about which she now had such misgivings.

It is easy to imagine the panic that seized her, as with flaming cheeks and that consciousness of all eyes upon her, which was sure sooner or later to bring all eyes upon her, she hurried on, trying to out-distance her tormentors.

But she was likely to fail in this attempt, when she contended with young gentlemen capable of pursuing the race, according to inclination, upon feet, head, or hands, while she, by reason of her incapacity, was constrained to mere ordinary methods of progression.

She could only hope for escape by a gradual diminution of their interest and energies, but she altogether miscalculated the measure of these.

She endured torments. Her foes were too wary to bring down upon their shock heads the ready hands of the police, but they succeeded easily in rendering her for the time being the most miserable, shamefaced creature in London.

She presently caught at an opportunity of escape,

but not before she had reached the limits of nervous torture ; then she took refuge in a shop and asked for a cup of tea.

The shopkeeper dispersed the energetic quartette, though for some time the members of it persisted in flattening their sharp features against the window, which disclosed an appetising view of gustatory possibilities.

They were, however, eventually dislodged ; and Phyllis, noting their fasting eyes fixed longingly upon the good things they were not likely to enjoy, though she had so recently been their victim, could not help pitying them.

By the time she had finished her tea, to which she added the substantial delights of a Bath bun, it began to grow dusk, the haze of evening being increased by a slight fog.

For the first time, as she left the shop, having, in payment for her meal, parted with almost her last pence, she wondered where she should sleep that night.

And now a sense of her absolutely friendless condition smote her with a sudden dread. In her haste to maintain an ideal, she had forgotten the common needs of life. She had sought a shadowy height, and found there nowhere that she might lay her head.

The tumult of traffic around her sounded all



at once in her ears like the roar of a hostile world. Each passer-by was bent upon some object ; each had a home, she thought, were it never so humble, but she—she was now without aim or home, alone and friendless, in the great city.

Her courage and imagination came soon to her aid, as she walked slowly onward, glad of the increasing dusk which saved her from observation and attention such as had lately assailed her ; and her spirits rose as she reflected, though not without a little shudder, that even if she had to stay in the streets all night, to-morrow she would start early on her quest of occupation, and would surely be able to secure some shelter ere the day was out.

Ignorance is, perhaps, one of the commonest sources of courage. It is certain that if Phyllis had had any conception of the circumstances possibly attendant on a night spent in the streets of a big city, she would not have accepted her fate with so much fortitude.

It was only one night, she reassured herself, and it was summer, and it would not be very cold. She might stay on one of the stone seats of a bridge she had crossed. She could watch the moonlight and the shimmering flash of the street lamps on the water below. It would not be dark even were there no moon, for the gaslights now began to appear,

showing like pallid ghosts of flame against the glow of the sunset.

It would be a strange, new experience. She could curl herself up in a corner of the stone seat, perhaps even sleep a little, and no one would molest her. There were plenty of stalwart, reliable-looking policemen about to whom she could appeal, were it necessary. She knew nothing of the interminable strivings of the blue-coated faculty to keep each weary-footed wayfarer forever moving on.

Ignorant of these stern proclivities, she derived much comfort from their presence as they paced the street with heavy tread. No matter how dark it grew, or lonesome, there would always be policemen about.

Retracing her steps with some difficulty, she found the bridge she had chosen for her night's lodging, finding, at the same time, that its seats were already crowded by persons of more or less unattractive aspect. However, she managed to slip in beside an elderly man, who, though grim of face and gruff of voice, looked more respectable than his neighbours.

She was very grateful for the rest and security of her dark corner, albeit the wind blew up cold from the river and her dress was thin.

Worn out in mind and body she yielded herself at

length to the tremulous, soothing play of the river's lights and shadows. Looking into its black depths, she forgot her troubles.

The whispering, shadowy darkness stilled the fret of her fears, drew her mind down into its deeps, hushing it with the calm of mysterious, vast indefiniteness. Such calm as brooded over all Nature, ere man furrowed her greatness with his small landmarks, fingered her mightiness with his tiny touch

## CHAPTER VIII.

Save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,  
There's nothing left to call her own.

FOR some time the girl's senses had been lulled by the rhythmic, soft wash of the river below her, hearing unconsciously in it, backward through the ages, faint, far-off echoes of those mighty moving pre-historic waters ere they had been bidden to bring forth abundantly, when her quiet was disturbed by the rising of the man beside her.

'Now, then, young woman,' he said in gruff tones, 'stop dreaming and run home to your mother. It's too late for you to be out.'

She turned up to him large eyes, heavy still with the mystic sleep into which her senses had dropped.

'Ah, you look dazed,' he went on, 'and no wonder, when you've been wool-gathering for nigh

on two hours. I say, wake up and run home. This ain't the proper place, nor the proper time, for a girl like you to be out.'

He meant kindly, though he spoke harshly.

'I am doing no harm here,' she protested, indignant at his uncalled-for interference.

'Perhaps you are, perhaps you're not. Perhaps you will be, and perhaps you won't. Anyways, you'd best be getting home. It's close on eleven, and chill enough and dark enough, the Lord knows.'

He moved towards her as if to assist her obedience.

Phyllis sprang quickly to her feet.

'I may stay here if I like,' she insisted, 'and will you please let me alone.'

The man's tone at once changed.

'D—n you!' he cried savagely, 'but you'll soon get the starch taken out of you if you sit in the streets like a beggar. I was naught but a fool to bother about ye,' and he walked angrily away.

Phyllis resumed her seat with a sigh. All its other occupants had straggled away. She and the man, whose interest in her she had, out of her youthful independence, resented as an impertinence, being the last.

She shrank closer into her corner, so that the

light from the gas-lamp opposite should not reveal her. She shivered and looked apprehensively around. The man's words had waked her roughly. From the dreamy oblivion of her tired brain, she came back to the consciousness that cold, hunger and great fatigue were upon her, and that she had no means of relieving these physical distresses, whose urgency increased each hour.

She thought pathetically of the simple comforts of her poor home, of her supper of bread and milk, of the shelter and warmth of her mother's affection, of her little white bedroom, whose bareness and meagre belongings she had so often despised with a girl's fastidiousness.

'Oh, I never valued them till now when I have lost them,' she cried remorsefully, learning by a sufficiently hard personal experience, a comprehensive human truth.

As the night waned, and she became steadily wearier, changing her position often to relieve the aching of her bones, shivering with the cold, damp breath of the river into whose shadowy depths every now and again, as sleep overcame her, she seemed to be slipping; recovering herself with a cry and a clutch upon the chill stone, she grew humbler and laid her head upon the rough parapet, and weakened and wept, finally deciding

that she would go home to her mother next day.

Her fitful slumbers were broken once by the angry brawling of two drunken men who passed ; by the oaths which some belated woman hurled at her small, cowering son, and once by the stern hand of a police-officer, who shook her, not ungently, and demanded to know what she did there.

She entreated him to let her remain—a favour he allowed, though he grumbled a good deal about it, and kept a suspicious eye upon her, as each round of his beat brought him back to her.

The night was close and comparatively warm, and her position on the south side of the bridge was a fairly sheltered one, or she might have suffered more from the trying conditions of her experience.

Half a dozen young artisans going early to their work, stopped before her, as, overpowered by the sleep she struggled against, she lay in the grey dawn, with her head on her arm.

They would have roughly roused her, but they simultaneously choked their laugh and moved away as the girl's chilled sleeping lips woke in words, and trembled smilingly.

‘Leave her be,’ one said, awkwardly, kicking at

his neighbour to cover the shamefacedness of a sudden sentiment. 'Poor little devil, she ain't got much of a doss-up!'

The policeman woke her when it was light.

'I say,' he volunteered, 'you'd best get out of this. People are passing. And I've got to leave this beat, and another 'ull come, and he 'ud maybe take you to the station—a lass like you. Come now, rouse yourself,' he persisted as Phyllis rubbed her eyes and stirred her numbed limbs stiffly, trying to comprehend the situation.

Looking about her, she saw the great city as far as she could see it, muffled in thick grey mist and cloud, only the faintest line of red in the east breaking the chill monotone. Grey boats, manned by mysterious, wraith-like creatures of the same sad hue, glided at intervals along the river; grey smoke lifted itself dully to the sky, stealing from ill-defined, dusky chimneys, and grey fog lay like the heavy breath of sullen sleepers over every house.

Then, like a sudden lurid anger, a fireball rose to eastward, flashing red flame upon the laden clouds licking the slimy surface of the water with a fiery tongue.

Leaping from roof to roof, with incendiary torch, the red flare roused the slumbering city, rolled up the murky vapours, and with a burst of sunshine pro-



claimed the day. Flag on flag of the risen king was reared in the cloudy sky, or gleamed from the sails of shadowy craft, moving sluggishly down stream. Even the mud of the banks caught the glow, and glistened like golden sands.

The brighter light touched with 'rosy finger' the girl's weary face, showing it haggard and ashen with the chill and unrest of the night.

'You'd best be stirring yourself, my lass,' the policeman said presently, glancing with unheeding eyes towards the ruddy east, where her gaze was fixed, fascinated.

'You look cold and sick. You can get a hot cup of coffee at the stall yonder, in a minute or so pointing across the street.

Phyllis thanked him and rose. At first she could not stand, but holding on to the parapet she beat her chilled feet up and down upon the pavement, restoring the circulation slowly.

Then, with numb fingers, she arranged her dress and tightened the coils of her hair ; mechanically performing as much of a morning toilette as was possible under the circumstances.

The preparations for the modest coffee-depôt were proceeding rapidly, and faint and shivering, she determined to linger near until they should be completed, and she could get a warm drink.

‘Mind ye,’ the policeman said at parting, ‘I sha’n’t put up with it another night. For a party like you to sleep out, is what I call a suspicious circumstance. It’s agin’ my duty, and if you don’t go back to yer friends, or get a home somewhere, you’ll have to try the workus.’

The girl flamed out upon him, in spite of her weakness.

‘How dare you talk so?’ she faltered indignantly, the man’s distasteful advice stimulating her circulation, and sending the blood in angry leaps from her heart, far more effectually than mere physical exercise could have done. ‘How dare you speak so disrespectfully?’

‘Disrespectfully!’ he echoed, with a sarcastic stress upon the word; then recognising in her resentment the look and tone of a superior class, he continued more civilly: ‘If you want respect, young lady, you mustn’t stay in the streets all night. Respectable folk don’t think much of them as hasn’t good homes and friends.’

With which stricture upon the houseless, and cynicism upon the well-to-do, he turned on his heel and walked heavily away.

‘How cruel—how insolent!’ Phyllis cried hotly, pacing to and fro upon the bridge, ‘as if I could have helped it. As if anyone would sleep out of doors if they could help it.’

But a great shame fell upon her, that anyone should be in a position to speak to her thus, and with the warm blood tingling through her delicate frame she reflected that she had passed the night like a vagrant—in worse fashion, indeed, than did the tramps and vagabonds in her country home; for these lay down on the green bosom of their mother earth, or in the farmers' barns amongst the sweet-smelling hay, while she—she had slept in the open street, where anyone might have seen her lying, with no cover for her face, no shelter for her limbs.

She had not seen it in this light before.

Her action and, consequently, all the circumstances surrounding it, had seemed to her but honourable and right; she had acquitted herself according to her girlish standard of truth, and in the heat of her resolution had been content to abide by its results, no matter how distasteful these might prove.

But two outsiders had shown her her position from a conventional standpoint, had shown her nothing but shame and degradation attaching to it, and like a bird with a broken wing, her soaring idealism shrank and fell to earth at the world's first stone.

Her delight at having escaped her husband, the high hopefulness and courage which had inspired

her flight, and the life she meant to work out, sank to a zero of depression.

The sharp spear of public opinion pierced the bright armour of her illusions, and showed her to herself only as a homeless vagrant who had slept shamefully out in the streets.

## CHAPTER IX.

To found a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers may, at first sight, appear a project fit only for a nation of shopkeepers.

HAVING pricked her sensitive self-esteem until she smarted painfully all over, Phyllis presently resolved, like the brave girl she was, to forget her humiliation and stick to her guns.

That passing weakness which had come upon her in the night, whispering return, she now nerved herself against, determining that only the direst straits should so compel her.

With a straightening of her slim spine and a corresponding stiffening of her moral backbone, she walked resolutely past the coffee-stall, whence a comforting warmth and sufficiently grateful aroma proclaimed the fact that hot coffee was ready, and this at the modest cost of a penny a cup.

Half a dozen seedy-looking customers were already purchasing, taking their draughts in a downhearted sort of way, as though these were not

greatly to their taste, as, indeed, they were not likely to be, to palates used to far more fiery stimuli.

Poor Phyllis's unspoilt appetite would have accepted cheerfully the adulterated, queer decoction, but with a feeling that she was keeping the traditions of her class up to the world's level, she put her pretty nose in the air, and, as I have said, tripped resolutely past the vulgar temptation.

She would wait until the shops were open, and spend her remaining pence in a more respectable, if a dearer, market. She would not again expose herself to slights such as she had already experienced.

As luck had it, that day she fell upon her feet, though it turned out that these slender extremities planted themselves in thorny thoroughfares. Having stimulated her energies by a glass of hot milk, procured conventionally and expensively in a shop, she started off in vigorous pursuit of fortune, who, fickle maid, will often, when so pressed, turn and take her pursuer by the hand.

This now happened to Phyllis, and happened none too soon, for the summer sun was already setting in the late evening, and, her last pence gone, she was spent in hope and strength when, to her joy, she read upon the gateway of a large building, the words, 'Minerva Hospital for Women.'

From the unhesitating alacrity with which each and everyone had refused the services she shyly offered, it had by this time dawned upon her, that the means of living do not grow like berries on the hedges ; likewise, that the talents she possessed were of but small account.

She awoke to the conviction that she had marvellously over-rated herself.

The shops had no need of work-girls. The few astounded ladies into whose houses she ventured, were already supplied with governess, nurse and sewing-woman ; and several business-men, when in her simplicity she invaded their dingy offices, smiled up from their desks, and dismissed her kindly but evidently without compunction, and as if they had but little faith in those powers of copying or book-keeping she timidly asked them to test.

Once she entered, buoyantly, a florist's, feeling that here at least she would be capable and in her element, but the fashionably-dressed, wasp-waisted mistress drove her forth contemptuously, bringing hot tears to her eyes by the stinging application of a sharp tongue.

A pale, asthmatic confectioner, in whose shop she spent her last pence, in response to her faltering question as to whether he could advise her where to seek employment, changed his obsequious tone

straightway, and leering at her out of watery eyes, suggested jocularly that as he had just lost his 'missis,' maybe she might 'fancy the place.'

She fled, shuddering.

'He looked so respectable and was so civil. Oh, mother, mother, what will become of me?' she cried, with a despairing sob.

Her appeals for direction to the nearest hospital had met with more or less bewildering replies, the minutest and fullest invariably confusing her the most—the short-cuts and byeways and relation to other buildings insisted upon, sounding as Greek in her stranger ears.

And then, at last, when all hope of finding this refuge had vanished, she came suddenly upon it, Her heart leapt high. Here was her goal. Ere night closed in, she would surely now be able, by a comforting line, to allay the spectre of a distracted mother, which throughout that terrible day had haunted her.

With a flush of hope, she turned in at the gate.

In her imaginative mind, an atmosphere of charity and Christian love surrounded hospitals and all appertaining thereto, and she felt already the Minerva's tender arms about her.

Here they would certainly find work for her willing hands. Here she would meet with no curt speech or stingy-souled expediency. She would



ask nothing for her services—only her daily bread and a roof.

Passing through a pleasant, tree-shaded courtyard, she was interrogated at the door.

‘And who may ye be wanting, miss?’ A red-coated porter, of gigantic height and breadth, stood blocking the way.

Beyond him, through the spaces between his great, akimboed arms and big frame, she could see into the hall, where several sickly-looking women and children rested on a bench.

‘I wish to see the—the matron.’

‘Matron is out. Will the assistant-matron do?’

‘Yes; I will see her, please.’

‘Shall I take any message, miss?’

‘No, thank you.’

Then an idea struck her. This might be the place—it looked so immense, even London could not need many such—she might by luck have lighted upon the very hospital where was the vicar’s daughter.

‘Is there a nurse here named Heath?’ she inquired.

‘No such name as Heath, a nurse. I know all the ladies well. Maybe a patient so called.’

‘No. The lady I mean is a nurse.’

‘Not here. Some other hospital, no doubt.’ This in a depreciatory tone, as if all other

hospitals, and anyone belonging to them, were far beneath the notice of his more loftily-centred interests !

‘ Perhaps you’ll come in, miss,’ he said presently, as Phyllis stood, disappointed and silent, on the steps. ‘ The assistant-matron will see you.’

‘ Thank you.’ She entered, and was shown into a small office, which apparently served as ante-room to the audience-chamber of the authorities.

After waiting here for half an hour, with a palpitating heart and many anxious glances at the closed door, there presently entered a neat maid.

‘ Miss Benson is disengaged now, miss, if you’ll come this way. What name, please ? ’

‘ Miss Eve.’

‘ Miss Eve ’ followed close upon the herald of her name, passing through several long corridors, into which wards opened. She caught panoramic glimpses of beds in rows, patients occupying some, whilst others sat beside theirs, convalescing in scarlet jackets. Flowers cut and in pots, ferns, ornamental aquaria, bright coloured pictures and painted texts, she noted—these impressing her pleasantly, forming a delightful contrast to the gloomy aspect and tortured sick-beds which had been her notion of a hospital interior.

She was ushered presently into a cheerful, artistic

room, where a keen-eyed, practical, smiling little woman stood up to receive her.

‘Miss Eve,’ she repeated after the maid, ‘can I do anything for you, or did you wish especially to see matron? You are a friend of hers, perhaps?’

‘No, no. I am not,’ Phyllis said hurriedly, then plunged straightway *in medias res*. ‘I only want to know if I can be taken as a nurse in the hospital. I should be so grateful, and would so love the work.’

The expression of the assistant-matron changed all at once from that of friendly interest in a possible acquaintance of her superior in office, to one of mere official civility.

‘Have you nursed before?’ she queried, glancing doubtfully at the young, inexperienced-looking figure before her.

‘No; but I should soon learn. I am strong and quick and—’ here she hesitated, then ventured explanatorily—‘You see I must get my own living, and I should like best to be a nurse.’

Miss Benson smiled pityingly.

‘It is rather a question of demand and supply than anything else,’ she said, in a brisk tone. Women are apt to run their hobby-horses to death, and especially when the quadruped assumes the form of business do they find a difficulty in doffing the riding-habit. ‘At present,’ she con-

tinued, 'we have far more demand for vacancies than for nurses.'

'I would work for nothing. I would not ask for money,' Phyllis faltered, turning sick with terror at the prospect of another homeless night.

'We do not accept workers on those terms,' was the answer. Then was added—more kindly—as something in the listener's face told how bitter was her disappointment: 'I am sorry; perhaps you might call again.'

'Thank you. You are very good,' Phyllis almost sobbed, then, controlling herself by a strong effort, she went out hastily.

## CHAPTER X.

She was active, stirring, all fire—  
Could not rest—could not tire—  
To a stone she might have given life.

‘TUT, tut, tut, child. Why, goodness gracious me! what are you about?’ suddenly broke upon her ears in a deep, cheery voice, and she felt her arm clutched vigorously.

Her head had reeled, as she went slowly down the staircase, up which, some minutes earlier, she had climbed with light though tired feet. She stumbled and would have fallen headlong, had she not just then been saved by the strong supporting hand.

‘Thank you, I felt faint. I have had no food. I am better now,’ she explained, as capably as her trembling lips would let her.

‘And, bless me! why have you had no food? The way you young folk wreck your health and constitutions is nothing less than criminal. Come

right in here and rest yourself. Better? Why, you look like a ghost.'

Phyllis, in her weakness and depression, yielded to the declaiming insistence of this opportune friend, and permitted herself to be half-led half-carried into a small room opening on to one of the wards.

'Give her some hot milk, sister,' commanded the owner of the resonant lungs and convenient arms whom, while our heroine meekly despatches the reviving fluid, I present to the reader.

'She'—for the deep voice issued from a feminine frame, if, indeed, one may so style the stalwart shapelessness of Dr. Janet Doyle—was the senior physician of the 'Minerva Hospital for Women,' dean of the women's school attached thereto, and lecturer in the several colleges which admitted women to their privileges.

'Dr. Janet,' as her friends and patients called her, was a middle-aged, genial-looking woman, of a height and figure whose ample proportions she made no effort to disguise by dress.

She was clad in a rough, loosely-fitting tweed garb—one could not call it a gown, for the skirt was of that genus distinguished by the term 'divided,' and the bodice was made and worn after the fashion of a man's shooting-coat.

Her face was remarkable for its shrewd perceptiveness, and the mellow good humour which

brightened her dark skin pleasantly and softened her fine eyes. The forehead was large and massive, the chin broad and resolute. He would be a bold man who opposed the firm and fiery will of this big woman, and a cool one who could withstand, unmoved, the keen, sarcastic shafts she was capable of casting from her strong lips.

Her hair was black—not a grey thread in it—despite her fifty years, her teeth white and perfect, points of which she was apt to vaunt herself in her strictures on an age of marked physical degeneration.

For the further delineation of her character, the development of our story must serve. Suffice it to say that in the course of her career many a sufferer rose up to call her name blessed, many a broken life found balm in her large hands.

While Phyllis drank her milk dejectedly, feeling that the last sip would be the signal for her departure, homeless and unfriended, into the shelterless streets, Dr. Janet watched her with bright, shrewd eyes.

Her attention appeared to be wholly engrossed by the examination and repair of a disjointed stethoscope, upon which her nimble fingers had pounced on entering, but she possessed the physician's art of observing without being seen to observe, and she exerted her powers with some interest upon

the dispirited girl before her. This latter was too abjectly miserable to attempt concealment of her misery, as, with a hopeless chill at her heart, and a dull weariness of body, she sat silent.

The sister had left, in obedience to a hint from Dr. Janet, her quick eye detecting some irregularity in the adjoining ward.

The doctor presently broke the silence.

‘Have you been ill, child?’ she asked, her question losing some of its insistent directness in the accentuation of her attention upon the ‘bin-aural’ whose joints she was articulating.

‘No,’ Phyllis answered with pathetic lips. ‘I have not been ill, but I took a long journey yesterday, and I had a very tiring day, and—and I did not sleep much.’

‘A girl of your age should not be broken up by a night’s sleeplessness. Nerves out of order?’ This last so abruptly that Phyllis started and almost dropped her cup. ‘You need not answer,’ the doctor continued; ‘they answered for themselves and answered shamefully. Don’t you know you ought to have no nerves?’

Phyllis was too ignorant of her physical economy to wonder how it would fare without its complex telegraphic system, and too weary, had she known, to assert her neurotic rights.

‘But,’ the elder woman grumbled, ‘you are all



alike, you young people of this generation. The babies of our degenerate century can't see the way to their mother's breast without spectacles. Its children can't skip without inflaming their bones, or learn their A B C without inflaming their brains, and our young men and women are haggard and toothless ere they are twenty.'

'At least I am not toothless,' Phyllis protested, with a faint smile which disclosed a white regularity of teeth. 'I have never needed to go to a dentist.'

'Yet you have reached the mature age of—let me see—seventeen?'

'I was seventeen last January.'

'Then you are a prodigy and, to prove the rule by an exception, I should like to exhibit you to some of my classes.'

'Oh, please don't,' Phyllis cried, alarmed by the energy and resolution of the other's tone. 'Indeed, I should not like it, and I *have* had neuralgia.'

'I haven't a doubt of it,' the doctor assented with an angry snort. 'Aches and pains, pains and aches—these are the shibboleth of modern civilisation. But,' she added, rising and laying tenderly aside the successfully re-united stethoscopic limbs, 'I must resume my Partingtonian character and drive my little broom against the ocean. You look pale still. You had better stay and rest. By-the-bye, did you come to see anyone here?'

‘I came to see the matron—I want to be a nurse in the hospital.’

‘Too young! No young woman can properly stand the strain before she’s two-and-twenty. Let four years pass over your head, and then come back again. And, in the meantime, don’t go about fasting; nourish your body on wholesome food, don’t cram it with “stodgers” as most of your kind do, and good-bye.’

With a friendly nod, she opened the door.

‘Oh, but, please,’ Phyllis cried, rising and stretching two appealing hands towards the big doctor’s retreating form, ‘please stay a moment. Will you advise me? I have no friends—no money—no home.’

Terror loosened the reins of her tongue, and let the truth go.

Dr. Janet turned back.

‘No home, no friends,’ she repeated, renewing her attentive observation of the suppliant. ‘Why, where do you come from? Where is your mother?’

‘Mother is very poor. I had to marry an old man, and I hate him, and I ran away to get my own living.’

Dr. Janet misunderstood her.

‘And you fled to escape marrying the old man? How old is he?’

‘Oh, quite fifty,’ Phyllis cried emphatically.

‘Um! Ah!’ Dr. Janet mused with a whimsical pursing of her mouth. ‘So you regard a person of fifty as a patriarch—only fit for a sarcophagus, I suppose. Well, well, you’ll some day see it from a different prospective. And you are not very fond of him?’

‘Oh, I hate him, I hate him!’

‘So it seems. He hasn’t much money, I presume, this antique being?’

‘Oh, yes, he is very rich, and has lovely houses and horses.’

‘Yet you desert him? Truly we have here an uncommon specimen of the genus woman,’ Dr. Janet said drily. ‘And so you would rather be a nurse. Remember, he could give you fine clothes, carriages, luxurious food, and could take you travelling. Perhaps, though, having reached such an advanced age, he is blind, deaf, and halt.’

‘Oh, no,’ Phyllis corrected her in all good faith. ‘He is quite well and active. And I should like the nice things, of course, but not him!’

‘Probably! You want to get everything and to give nothing. That isn’t the way of the world, my child, and so you’ll find. For every *quo* each one of us must give his *quid*, and the *quid* is generally worth a great deal more to us than the *quo*! That sounds like slang, but it’s very good Latin.’

Then, returning to the point. ‘What does your

mother say to all this? Does she know where you are?’

‘Oh, no! She would not have consented. I hoped to be taken into the hospital, and then to write to her, but they will not have me, and I don’t know what I can do.’

‘When did you come?’

‘Only yesterday.’

‘Have you no friends—nowhere you can go? Where are you staying?’

‘I have no friends, no home; and oh, I am so ashamed—I slept in the streets!’

‘God bless me!’ Dr. Janet ejaculated and sat down again.

With hot shameful tears, Phyllis told her adventures of the previous night—how she had crouched and shivered in the corner of a bridge, and how during that day she had sought employment, only to be rejected and repulsed.

All the time Dr. Doyle kept her keen eyes upon her, but there was no mistaking the girl’s shame-faced ingenuousness.

Without intentional concealment, for she had no thought of keeping back any part of the truth, the fact that she was actually married did not transpire, the doctor gathering from her incoherent story that the ceremony was on the eve of performance when she fled.

‘Of course,’ she said, when this recital of wrongs was finished, and Phyllis sat abashed and down-cast, her tear-stained features hidden in her hands, ‘of course, the conventional thing would be to put you in the train and send you back to your mother—that would be the shortest way out of the difficulty, only, I suppose, you’d run off again, and next time might not fall into such practical hands. I shall have to think it over after dinner. One can’t reflect on an empty stomach. A hungry man is more or less of a fool. There is no such ballast for the mind as a good meal! In the meantime, you come right along with me!’

Saying which, she ushered the amazed girl rapidly down the staircase, across the courtyard, and finally seated her in a comfortable victoria which stood with its two horses at the hospital gates.

‘Home,’ she called to the coachman, and Phyllis found herself in a fever of bewilderment and hope, whirling luxuriously along the crowded thoroughfares through which her tired, dispirited limbs had so recently and laboriously dragged.

They stayed on their way at a post-office, whence the doctor, learning from the girl her name and address, sent a reassuring telegram to her mother.

I gave no clue,’ she replied to the question in

Phyllis's frightened eyes. 'I don't want to bring a regular hornet's nest of distracted mothers and deserted lovers about my ears. I haven't the least sympathy with the old fool. What business had he to be marrying a child like you? What business has a child like you to be thinking of marrying? Bah! I have no patience with it!'

## CHAPTER XI.

'Tis my vocation, Hal : 'tis no sin for a man to labour  
in his vocation.

THE next fact of which Phyllis was clearly conscious, was that, with hair freshly brushed and coiled, and the weariness dashed out of her face by a delightful dip into cool water, she was sitting with bright, expectant eyes, and a crimson fever spot on either cheek, taking dinner with Dr. Janet.

The dining-room in which she found herself was one in an old-fashioned, roomy, Harley Street house, where the doctor lived comfortably.

She had a large and varied practice, and it being an axiom of her creed that no doctor should undertake more duty than he could well and conscientiously perform, thus curtailing the number of her patients, it had come to be considered a privilege to consult her.

People willingly waited rather than lose the benefit of her opinion, which assumed a value pro-

portionate to the difficulty with which it was obtained.

Of no particular politics, her social ethics were inherently radical. She gave precedence to none.

The name of a royal personage, seeking her advice, stood upon the list beside and after that of a humble tradesman's wife, and this same royal personage waited in Dr. Janet's library some minutes behind the time appointed, while the doctor emphatically impressed upon Mrs. Sarsnet the importance of feeding her babies upon food which was in some degree capable of digestion by their small stomachs.

The royal personage graciously and gracefully accepted Dr. Janet's brief apology, and respected her the more because she respected herself and her profession.

After a while, it became rather a fashion to proclaim oneself a patient of the eccentric and popular doctor. A prescription of hers was regarded somewhat in the light of a social distinction, though it was a distinction shared by the shabby.

The fashionable ladies who delighted to honour her, took their places in her waiting-room beside the thread-bare poor, and saw these frequently conveyed, under the doctor's stalwart guidance, into the consulting room before themselves, and with a courtesy more marked than that with which they were distinguished.



Despite a natural irritation against such confused notions of class and mass, her courage and independence pleased them. The sense that, in the sight of the Medicine she practised, all were equal, gave an unwonted dignity and value to the art.

In addition to the charm of eccentricity attaching to her, Dr. Janet was a born physician—a manifestation of talent as rare as is that of the poet.

She possessed the subtle, intuitive capacity essential to a good diagnostician, and, as well, the healthful mesmeric personality and reserve of nervous force, which, by their presence alone, renew the strength and vital energies of the sick, restoring the equilibrium of disordered powers.

She had ‘healing hands,’ her patients said ; and though it may be scientifically shown that such phenomena are non-existent, there being no special physiological differentiation of nerve and muscle tissue to this end known, the notion nevertheless gained wide-spread currency, as do many other faiths which science proves to be baseless.

‘If disease be contagious, why should not health be equally so?’ asked one of her votaries of a learned professor.

‘Dear madam,’ was his grave reply, ‘disease has a bacillus—health has not!’

Whatsoever views Dr. Janet personally may have

held upon the subject, she committed herself to none, and only scolded her patients roundly when taken to task.

‘I am not to be fooled by any such nonsense,’ she protested; ‘you’ll please to resume the physic you pronounce detestable, take sensible meals at sensible intervals, go to bed at a Christian hour, walk little, sleep much, drink less, and generally follow out the *regimen* I have indicated, and don’t be depending on my finger-tips for your cure. A nice lazy way it might be out of your difficulties, but I can’t cure you, if you won’t cure yourself. If you want quackeries you had better go to the advertisement-mongers!’

As her popularity increased, Dr. Janet might have made a large fortune, but her obstinate limiting of the number of her patients limited in equal ratio the number of her fees, so that though she was more than comfortably well off, she was not wealthy.

However, unconscious as she would have been careless of our observation, she had now fulfilled her prandatorial duties, and with brain ballasted by the good things taken, conducted Phyllis to her cosy drawing-room, there to deal, under the sobering influence of digestion, with the latter’s case.

‘And so you want to be a nurse?’

‘Oh, yes!’

‘How should you like to be a doctor?’

‘A doctor! Oh, that would be impossible. I should never be clever enough.’

‘Nonsense, child! An average woman has the brains of an average man, and the average doctor is only an average man.’

‘Oh, but I know nothing of Latin, or Greek, or mathematics.’

‘Do you know the rule-of-three, and French?’

‘Yes; and I know something of German.’

‘Well, then, you could learn enough of the other subjects in six months—hard-working, of course—to pass an Arts exam. Come, now; how should you like it?’

‘It’s frightening to think of all at once.’

‘You are too pretty, it’s true,’ the doctor mused, gazing reflectively at the delicate, fair face before her; ‘but five years’ head-work tones a woman’s looks down. Close study takes the iron out of her blood, and spoils her complexion; cramming her brain thins and fades her hair; stooping for ever over books ruins her figure; so that by the time you were qualified, you might put in quite a presentable professional appearance.’

Phyllis looked rather rueful. Not many girls could, unmoved, see themselves in so disenchanting a perspective.

Dr. Janet laughed.

‘Oh, it’s only half true,’ she said. ‘And some

women have enough beauty to stand it. One of us was good-looking enough at the end of her curriculum to be officially called "a guy" by her dean, and affably exhorted to "put on an ugly bonnet and go to New Zealand." But our last dean had a rooted prejudice against beauty. Good looks, by the way, are the greatest of all obstacles to a woman's success. They attract men's attention to her. This takes her attention from her work, and, worse still, brings other women down upon her. Yes, believe me, beauty is a very doubtful blessing to our sex, and especially this is true of those members of it who have to get their own living.'

The quick perceptions of Dr. Janet here interpreted a question which glanced out of the grey eyes regarding her.

'No, my dear, I never suffered very grievously from that affliction. I had good eyes, good teeth and hair, a neat figure and a fresh colour. I spoilt my figure early by athletics, and I bronzed my fresh complexion with midnight oil. I have still my eyes, teeth and hair pretty much as they were so that time has not wrought much disaster in me. And when I look round upon the lot of better-looking women, I thank the lucky star which presided over my birth and ruled that I should be plain.'

Dr. Janet was in one of her genial, after-dinner

moods. Her work was finished for the day. She was conscious of duties well-fulfilled. None of her 'cases' had refused to be cures, and she now relaxed the busy focus of her mind, threw off her professional habit, and became jovial, good-humoured and talkative.

'Pretty women,' she continued, making a pack of cards for her favourite game of Patience, 'have few friends of either sex. Women discountenance them—some because they are envious, others because they are afraid for husband, son, or brother. Men resent them for being too attractive to approach platonically, and incapable of reciprocating all the unplatonic interest with which they are favoured. I am sorry for you, little woman, in that destiny has gifted you with exceptional good looks, and has not, at the same time, placed you in a position to be independent of their disadvantages. However, we are wandering from the point,'—here she lost herself in a large enjoyment of her game. Then, winning presently at a canter, she inquired: 'Well, have you made up your mind to be a doctor?'

'If you think I should do,' Phyllis answered. 'I will do anything you advise. But,' she added, hesitatingly, 'it could not be managed. We are so poor.'

'Poppy-cough and moonshine,' was the irrelevant reply. 'You just leave that to me. There are

funds, and legacies, and scholarships, and, bless my soul! what does a baby like you know about money?’

Phyllis, overwhelmed by this unexpected kindness, timidly bent and kissed the large hand so dexterously busy with the cards.

‘You are a good angel,’ she faltered.

‘I can be very much of—of the other thing,’ Dr. Janet said brusquely.

But few persons ventured to approach familiarly the big doctor. Even children, though they loved and trusted her, eyed her with large wonder from a distance, but were rarely tempted to be affectionately demonstrative, and the unwonted touch of the girl’s soft lips upon her hand rather put her out of countenance.

‘Don’t be a simpleton,’ she protested, rubbing from her sleeve a tear that Phyllis had let fall as she bent forward. ‘I do it to please myself. Does one ever do anything except he gets satisfaction from it? And I can tell you, when once you are heels over head in your work, you’ll many and many a time rue the day that put you in touch with a tweed-clad old angel who converted you to medicine. Goodness gracious me, it’s striking eleven! Run away to your bed, child!’

## CHAPTER XII.

Lost labour ! Vain bookworms have sat in  
The halls of dull pedants who speak  
Strange tongues, the dead lore of the Latin,  
The scroll that is godlike and Greek ;  
Have wasted life's spring-tide in learning  
Things long ago learnt all in vain ;  
They are slow, very slow in discerning  
That book-lore and wisdom are twain.

So Phyllis entered upon the preliminary studies of a learned profession.

Her mother, at her wish, came soon to live in London, and as Dr. Janet refused, point-blank, to part with her *protégée*, for whom she had conceived a violent affection, Mrs. Eve, also, was induced to make her home with the hospitable doctor.

The poor lady went wearily but surely down that path she had been treading since her husband's death, and in the firm belief that it was leading her to him, set her feet with placid hope in his direction.

She died some six months after coming to town, and this bereavement, though it was a great shock

to her daughter, only served to draw her closer to her friend and second mother.

The actual fact of Phyllis's marriage had been revealed when Mrs. Eve first made Dr. Janet's acquaintance, and the elder women conscientiously talked the matter over in the girl's presence.

'You have given a sacred promise, Phyllis. You have taken a solemn vow,' Mrs. Eve said.

'Oh, mother,' Phyllis cried distracted, 'I did not know. I was mad, blind. And then it was too late, and he would not release me, and I was too weak to resist.'

Dr. Janet was satisfied that the girl had not meant to deceive her, that only a misapprehension of her incoherent story had led her to think there was nothing more binding than an engagement, and this she agreed was better broken than fulfilled.

But a marriage was a different matter.

It was a serious thing to keep apart two persons whom the law had made one, and with disappointment in her heart she told the girl she must return to her husband.

Then Phyllis, with a white face and burning eyes, stood up.

'Are you both against me?' she asked in a strangling voice. 'Will you cast me off and send me back to him?'



‘My dear, we have no alternative,’ her mother answered.

‘Give me until to-morrow,’ Phyllis said.

Dr. Janet could not sleep that night for the recollection of the girl’s voice and hopeless eyes.

Obeying some sudden instinct, she rose, threw on a dressing-gown, and went to seek her.

Her room was empty. The bed had not been disturbed. On a table lay two notes, one addressed to Dr. Janet—the other to her mother.

The good doctor ran back to her room, flung on a cloak, and wrapping her head in a shawl, strode downstairs and into the street.

She had read in the note addressed to herself, the words, ‘Good-bye for ever,’ then hurriedly glanced down the lines for some further indication of the writer’s plans. These, however, were not disclosed.

On gaining the street, she turned instinctively in the direction of the bridge where Phyllis had before taken refuge.

She shuddered through all her strong frame as she thought of the river running under, tempting the unhappy to its black oblivion.

She hurried swiftly on, and her big heart leapt within her at sight of the fugitive leaning desolate and dazed against the parapet.

‘It looks so dark and awful,’ the girl said, with

a terrible shrinking in her face and voice, her wide eyes turned with a magnetic horror to the blackness below her.

‘Come home, my dear,’ Dr. Janet said, laying a firm, kind hand upon her. ‘It is late, and I am lonely without you.’

Then Phyllis clung with convulsive clutch and wild weeping to her protector.

‘Oh, save me, my dear friend,’ she sobbed. ‘I do not want to die.’

Dr. Janet led her home.

Her elders, finding her inflexible upon this question of rejoining her husband, yielded at last.

‘I am not an atom sorry for him,’ Dr. Doyle concluded. ‘And I will intimate pretty definitely by letter that he may discontinue his search, that his wife is safe, and determined to elude him. If we give her up, only the worst mischief will result. He should not have made such a fool of himself!’

Her unsigned letter, received by De Richeville some few days later, had not, as may be supposed, a very conciliatory effect.

‘Curse them!’ he cried violently, tearing at the note with fury. ‘How dare they keep her from me? How dare she stay? I’ll hunt her out with every blood-hound of a lawyer in the city.’ And with this amiable object in view, he drove off to consult his solicitors.

But these latter, though they employed all the detective force available, failed in their search, for it never occurred to the astutest among them to seek her in the ranks of medicine.

A year had now passed, and Phyllis, with the one painful interruption of her mother's death, had applied herself strenuously to her studies, and succeeded in obtaining an entrance scholarship to the medical college of which her friend was dean.

I cannot, I fear, assure the reader that this task was performed throughout in an heroic spirit. There were many weaknesses and wailings as she went along.

She had no natural instincts of a student, her desultory life had not been conducive to the development of industry or application, and she many times looked back with wistful eyes to the old days, when she might leave a lesson that troubled her, and, catching up her hat, forget her worries in a country ramble.

On hot mornings, when her tutor was quickening her wits with old Euclid's propositions, her ears would be dulled suddenly, harking back to the babbling, splashing laughter of the brook that ran beside her old home, and the memory of song-birds would come with a burst of sound.

Then attention would loose hold of her mind,

her eyes dilate on some distant point of recollection, and the teaching of her lesson be lost.

It was a hard time, and if she waxed plaintive, as she did sometimes, about the difficulties of her task, Dr. Janet shook a warning finger.

‘My dear,’ she would say gravely, ‘we all of us must meet with dreariness and drudgery. It is the dread of these and the love of luxury and ease which are the ruin of our sex. We will not, if we can help it, work for our living. We marry to escape, and marriages so made, make the world miserable.’

The word ‘marriage’ was all the talisman needed to transform Phyllis from a petulant malcontent into a determined student.

The alternative of her onerous and sometimes irksome duties was a far more terrible thing to think about.

One hurried back look into the past conjured up the picture of a cool, fresh garden on a June morning ; of Diana standing amid tall shrubs, white and glistening with prismatic dews ; of Momus, with his marble leer ; and then, oh horror ! with the sudden apparition of the pale, old Marquis, grim and lined in the quivering, shadowy sunlight ; of his fierce, ravenous kiss ; of her wild passion of abhorrence—with a shudder, the girl would turn down hastily this page of her life, and go back with fortitude to the silent, lonely pages of her books.

On some of these occasions, she would lay her lips upon their leaves in quiet thankfulness for the wide avenues of solitude and calm forgetfulness they opened to her, where she might wander undisturbed by the ribald laughter of Momus and the memory of her husband.

But she was not a steed which climbed the heights of learning willingly, and she needed often the use of memory's spur to urge her onward.

The beauty of the clouds and sunlight, the tremor of a distant treetop, the footsteps and voices of passers-by, a child's laugh, the whistle of a butcher-boy, all these blurred the focus of her young mind, multiplied themselves into her arithmetical calculations, and peeped from the corners of greater or lesser angles.

Like the King Charles's head of Mr. Dick, the fanciful creatures of her hitherto errant thought intruded their strange, fantastic forms upon her studies, and with smiles and laughter undermined her resolution, bidding avaunt to that grim-faced, heavy-footed learning which was treading down the green spots, leaving no verdant fairy rings where fancy's dainty leaping feet might frolic.

Poor Phyllis endured all the difficulties that come to those whose brains have not been tutored early.

Her mind was a very wilderness of wild roses

which perfumed with odorous sweetness its tangled ways. The pink of the flowers was in her thought as upon her lips, the bloom was over her mind as on her cheeks, their fresh fairness looked from her dewy eyes, their faint scent stole out with every movement of her, as it lay in her wholesome breath.

It would take a very drear and sunless after-life to blight the flowers and spoil the subtle essence they distilled during those seventeen sweet years in which they had sprung and blossomed in the girl's nature.

The sun and the shadow, the breeze and the laughter of the brook, all the fair influences of her simple upbringing, had trembled through the tissues of her mind till they broke at last in little sparkling splashes on the silent shores of unthought thought.

Let everyone thank God for every year which leaves his brain unstrained by intellectual athletics, unbruised in its delicate fertility by the dull hand of routine education.

Let him thank God for the wholesome discipline and pruning which come inevitably into every natural life, but let him dread, with quick instinct, the artificial touch that trims, after one conventional fashion, the growing nature which, by a Greater Wisdom, was made infinite in its varieties.

Thanks to her social disadvantages which had

saved her during the tender, plastic years of growth, from the treadmill of ordinary education, Phyllis was, at eighteen, fresh and healthful of mind and body, and brought to bear upon her mental tasks a power of conserved natural faculty ; seeing with a wider view because her vision had never been narrowed to the focus of routine.

And she chafed against the long, close hours of work, showing her nature's healthiness which resented the chaining of its wings to book and desk.

However, she worked well and steadily, and albeit the parallelograms of Euclid oftentimes assumed proportions magnified by the tears that filled her eyes, she bravely climbed their bars and overcame the other obstacles which made the gateway of her intended profession.

She passed with flying colours, and, obtaining a scholarship, entered the medical college, happy in the consciousness that her efforts, if painful and arduous, had freed her kind patron of some of the expenses of her education.

## CHAPTER XIII.

God sendeth and giveth both mouth and the meat.

‘I SHALL give a dinner in honour of your success, Phyl,’ Dr. Janet said, with a proud glance at her *protégée*. ‘I knew all along you had grit in you. That first day I saw you, I said to myself, here is a girl who, if she does not, like a simpleton, marry and give her brains to her sons, will make a stir in the world. And nothing puts me into such an excellent temper as the fulfilment of my predictions. So I shall give a little dinner and introduce you to the world you’ll presently be startling, Miss Adam,’ she ended with a laugh.

For, with a whimsical love of contrarieties, she had decided upon Phyllis assuming the surname Adam.

‘Adam is the last person in the world the Old Serpent will be looking for,’ she chuckled.

Phyllis had accepted her cognomen, not caring much what character it assumed, so long as it



ceased to be De Richeville, though for a time she inclined to something more romantically sounding, such as Howard, or Trevor ; but as Dr. Janet had set her heart on outwitting the foe by transforming Eve into Adam—in more ways than one, some opponent of women's medical rights may growl—she meekly acquiesced.

‘Oh, please don't make me appear,’ she pleaded with regard to this proposed dinner ; ‘I would much rather not. I don't care at all for society, and I have never been to a dinner party in my life.’

‘Then you shall do so for the first time now,’ was the decisive answer. ‘Bless my soul, what is there to be afraid of? The pale young curate, with yellow hair, who'll take you down and be far more terrified of you than you can possibly be of him? You don't take peas with your knife, or soup with a fork. Why should you tremble at the notion of dining in company with your fellows?’

‘They will all be strangers.’

‘Fiddlededee ! do you think I am going to make a doctor of a girl who is afraid of strangers. Why, what in the name of goodness do you expect your patients to be? Do you think any-one who knew you would trust you with her life and guineas? No, Phyl, my boy, the sooner you get rid of that nonsense, the better, so you

will please go to your tailor and be measured for a dress suit.'

So Phyl's 'dress suit' was duly ordered, and came home in the form of a white æsthetic gown, with no other trimming than a silver girdle and a black ribbon, for she was still in mourning for her mother, and her pleasure in putting it on, and seeing how well it became her, went far to lessen her dread of this first entry into social life.

She had been kept too busy, during her studies, for relaxation of any kind. Dr. Janet had insisted upon the strictest rule of life, and the only breaks in her work were a daily morning walk and an hour's driving in the afternoon. 'No late hours for work or pleasure either,' her determined mentor said. 'A day lost will almost plough you, and then you will not be able to enter till next year.'

So Phyllis, having spent a year of grey chrysalis life, felt indeed a glow of pride and pleasure when, on that evening of the dinner party, she first spread the butterfly wings of her evening gown, though these were but white and simple.

With a smile on her lips, she ran down the staircase to the lamp-lit, curtained landing, then paused with a beating heart and a hand on the drawing-room door.

She was summoning courage to enter, for she had been late in dressing and already several of the

guests had arrived, when a man's voice spoke beside her.

'Let me open it for you,' and the door was thrown wide.

A glow of softened light, a gleaming of silken raiment, and the discord of talk, conducted in various keys and differing time, broke upon her senses.

With a quick glance she looked round for Dr. Janet, and perceiving her deeply engaged in conversation with a big, white-bearded individual, she turned to find a quiet corner.

The man who had entered with her, apparently seeing her embarrassment, found her a chair beside a window, then left her, while he paid his respects to the hostess.

Phyllis watched him with a vague feeling that she had met him before, but she could not recall any occasion on which this could have been possible.

He was a dark man, with a broad, strong-knit figure, well above the medium height. His face was serious, and might have been sombre in the strong, firm set of the features, had it not been for his full, large, brown-grey eyes, which at times became luminous and soft with a curious, sudden sweetness.

Phyllis did not note all these things during her brief speech with him that evening, but she learnt them later.

'Send me in with your little friend in white,' Dr.

Liveing whispered when he reached his cousin, for as such he insisted on regarding Dr. Janet, though the cousinship was many times removed. 'I only reached England this morning, and am tired out, so I am not in talking trim, and your young friend will be satisfied to enjoy herself through the medium of her solemn eyes, and I shall be satisfied to watch her.'

'What about Miss Stanton?' Dr. Janet asked, glancing in the direction of a tall, fair, handsome girl who was observing them with interest.

'I am a little tired of Miss Stanton, my good cousin,' was the ungallant answer. 'These sort of things never go, when they are worked so carefully. I am afraid you and Lady Stanton between you have succeeded only in making us bore one another to death. No! I will take in your little friend with the curly locks.'

So, a few minutes later, Phyllis found herself descending the stairs on the arm of the dark man who had interested her, because she could not get rid of the conviction that she had met him somewhere before.

She glanced surreptitiously again and again at the grave profile, which turned to her with an occasional conventional remark as they sat at dinner, but she could find no link in her mind connecting it with any incident in her life.

‘I must have seen it in a picture,’ she decided finally. ‘It is just the sort of face one does see in a picture.’

‘And so you are going to be one of us,’ Dr. Living said, as she sat looking with wandering, interested eyes into the faces of the assembled guests.

‘Are you a doctor, then?’ she asked.

‘I am, worse luck!’ he answered.

‘Why do you say “worse luck”?’ Do you not like your profession?’

‘Does anyone like his profession?’

‘Don’t they?’

‘We are getting a little involved,’ he said with a smile. ‘You answer my questions by asking me others, as the Yanks do. At this rate we shall never reach any very satisfactory conclusions. Shall we start again?’

‘If you like,’ Phyllis said, with a saucy little lift of her chin; ‘but I don’t suppose you will gain much valuable information.’

‘We shall see. Now, I will set you an example by replying fully to your query, do I not adore my profession—you did not say adore, I know,’ he persisted, seeing her make a little gesture of protest, ‘but you meant adore. No lady as young as you is content with so moderate a term as “like.” Well, far from adoring my profession, I don’t even tolerate it, and I have yet to meet the man who does.’

‘But why *are* you a doctor, then?’ Phyllis asked.

‘I think for no better reason than that I am not a lawyer or a parson. Now, on the other hand, why are *you* a doctor?’

‘I am not yet, but I hope to be some day. I don’t quite know why I am,’ she went on, colouring a little—‘because Dr. Janet wishes it, I fancy.’

‘Umph! And you don’t wish it yourself?’

‘Oh! but I do. I think it is a splendid profession. It is magnificent to be able to cure pain and restore people to health,’ she said with enthusiasm.

‘Ah! you will soon get over that,’ he replied provokingly. ‘All that fine fervour soon resolves itself into a question of fees, once you get into practice.’

‘Dr. Janet does not feel so,’ she protested indignantly.

‘Perhaps not,’ he admitted; ‘but, then, my cousin is different from most people. She is somewhat eccentric, you see.’

‘Is it eccentric to be good and fine and noble-hearted?’

‘It is, rather!’

Phyllis was silent. She did not much like this dark, cynical man, who levelled, with cool speech, her young hopes and ideals.

‘I am sure you are wrong,’ she urged, after a pause; ‘people are much better than you think them. It is easy to look on and find fault, but it is not always easy to do better.’

Dr. Liveing bent his head gravely to her young rebuke, and there came into his dark eyes the strange sweetness by which those, who knew him well, knew him best.

‘There is truth in that,’ he said. ‘Those who look on only and find fault, do worst of all. But,’ with a comical look, ‘I must thank you for your good opinion. It is nice to meet one who thinks me better than I think myself. I must, indeed, be a rare personage.’

‘Oh, but I did not, of course, mean you specially—’ Phyllis began.

‘But you will not exclude me individually from your flattering conclusions?’

She was silent.

‘Then I may continue to regard myself as a being who surpasses even his own magnificent estimation of himself?’

‘You are only making fun,’ she said loftily, and Dr. Liveing laughed from under his eyelids to see the disdainful dignity with which she stiffened her slender spine.

He selected some grapes for her, and, leaving her to forget her offended pride in her enjoyment

of the fruit, entered into conversation with a middle-aged woman on his other side.

‘And so you have enjoyed your holiday?’ the lady queried.

‘Well enough, Lady Stanton,’ he replied; ‘but an old bachelor like me doesn’t particularly care for knocking around sight-seeing. Time is the most difficult of villains to kill; he dies hard, even when a doctor has him by the throat.’

Lady Stanton ignored the latter sentence, which sounded rather too abstruse to tackle.

‘But why are you a bachelor, then?’ she questioned, with an involuntary glance towards her handsome daughter, who, just visible between the fronds of a large fern, sat talking to a curate.

‘I cannot persuade any lady to take pity on my loneliness.’

‘Come, now, that is nonsense,’ she replied seriously, ‘you are too modest. Most men, now-a-days, tell one very much the reverse.’

‘Yes?’

‘Yes, indeed. And, you know, you really must get married. It would be good for you professionally. Now, there is Dr. Janet signalling, and I shall have to go; and just as our conversation was becoming interesting; but come to me in the drawing-room, and then I can talk it over with you at leisure.’



She rose and swept away her satin skirts in the rear of a velvet train, superior in rank if inferior in magnificence.

Dr. Liveing, registering a mental vow that the renewal of this threadbare topic should not come about by any effort of his, returned to his wine.

## CHAPTER XIV

What I most prize in woman  
Is her affection, not her intellect.  
The intellect is finite, but the affections  
Are infinite and cannot be exhausted.

For woman is not undevelop't man  
But diverse.

ON rejoining the ladies later, he sought out Miss Stanton, and seated himself beside her, for no better reason, probably, than that she was placed in a corner of the drawing-room most distant from that occupied by her mother.

Lady Stanton forgave his disobedience when she reflected that, perhaps, after all, her attractive daughter might be more capable than she even of persuading the young man out of that state of single-blessedness she deprecated.

Phyllis, having been introduced to several members of the British matronhood, as an embryo student of medicine, and having been by these good ladies petted and patronised as a kind of infant phenomenon, betook herself soon to her

favourite window seat, and sat there with a book upon her knee, mentally wandering amid the company.

Dr. Janet, occupying considerable dimensions of space in the directions of both latitude and longitude, stood out markedly among her guests, as in cheery, dominant tones, she discussed some interesting subject with a mild-voiced, great professor.

‘I guess it has always been the same,’ she was saying, ‘only no one has made the discovery, just as we must always have been Simian, before Darwin proved us to be so. Man was probably always of three sexes—masculine, feminine and neuter, the greater proportion of him neuter.’

‘But, my dear madam,’ protested the professor, ‘indeed, I think you take your proposition too much for granted. I have seen no book upon the subject, no monograph even. What proof do you propose to bring to convince us of your theory?’

‘What proof is needed?’ she asked in her large way, which, even to see, seemed to extend one’s mental horizon. ‘Now, I do not wish to be offensively personal, though I might be so—I might be so,’ she said reflectively, looking round with a keen glance upon her guests, ‘so I will present myself as an example. Will anyone kindly observe me carefully and disinterestedly, and tell me if there is anything distinctly womanly in my appearance?’

She paused for a reply, and stood smiling good-humouredly around.

‘You are too civil,’ she went on with a little inclusive bow. ‘It would not be polite to point out the masculine massiveness of my head, my height and breadth and girth, my large, broad hands, my masculine features and voice. I tell you, with but a few exceptions, there is not a man in the room as muscular, rational and energetic—in a word, what you call masculine—as I.’

‘Bravo!’ cried Dr. Liveing from the opposite end of the room, where he sat listening to his cousin’s dissertation.

‘Don’t be impertinent, Paul!’ the latter answered, her mellow voice filling the silence.

The other men, each with ready satisfaction assuming to himself the place of one of those exceptions she had politely indicated as a standpoint whence her masculine friends might advantageously contrast themselves with their fellows, looked on amused.

‘No!’ she continued, warming with her subject; ‘sex is the acme of development, physical and mental. The lower we are in the scale of evolution, the less difference is there between the sexes. With savages the difference is little; the female is only female during the few short years in which she reaches her prime, then she devolutes rapidly

into a neuter. And this is true also, if in less degree, of the more civilised. Very few of us reach so perfect a physical development as to be of distinct sex in all our attributes, and if so, such a perfecting is but of short duration.'

'But surely, Dr. Janet,' someone urged, 'the women of to-day, with their delicate and refined physiques, are womanly.'

'That is just what they are not,' she protested, 'many of them, with their slim forms and little heads, are distinctly *feminine*; but feminine is a kind of spurious womanliness, a sort of degeneration which is no more womanliness than feebleness of mind is refinement of brain—womanly in the possession of tender heart, gentle tongue, soft hand, tactful loving mind, strong sweet patience, purity, sensitive honour, and all the lovable, adorable, worshipful, womanly virtues that have saved our wicked world from the chaos and ruin it deserves. How many women now-a-days have any of the instincts for home, and wife, and motherhood, which are the crown of their lovely sex? No! believe me, those of us who are not distinctly masculine are feminine, but very few are womanly.'

'And we,' suggested the pale-faced curate, 'how will you describe us, dear madam? Surely, in these days of athletic and intellectual attainment, you will not say we are not manly in body and mind?'

‘Look at you,’ she replied with a fine scorn, and as she spoke her eye rested for a moment on his slim proportions. But the slender, sickly curate, who, to the bystanders, looked like a reed beside his large opponent, was conscious of having ‘got his blue,’ of being a crack cricketer, and, moreover, of having taken second place in a mathematical tripos, and thus, fully convinced of his essential manliness, listened to her strictures with a fine complacency. ‘You men of to-day,’ she went on, ‘are as neuter as we. Instead of strengthening your growing bodies by rational, moderate exercise, you exhaust them by preposterous, prolonged athletics; you weaken and warp your minds by stupid mental acrobatics, which no more promote a healthy, all-round development than does the training of the professional “contortionist.” You cram yourselves with second and third-hand ideas, and leave no room for the growth and play of original thought, and the result of such unnatural exhaustion and mental distortion is rapid degeneration of the race. Only a fine, natural, healthful parentage and training produce men and women; modern civilisation, with its artificial modes of life and thought, causes devolution and the production of neuters.’

The neuters thus addressed, and, indeed, some of them were very presentable specimens of the genus,

smiled. They were more or less used to Dr. Janet's diatribes, and as each one fitted upon the head of his neighbour the cap she hurled, all sat comfortable in the conviction of personal bareheadedness!

'Which of you,' Dr. Janet went on, 'can fall in love, and that is very much the test of essential manliness—or womanliness? Why, goodness gracious me! a bit of romance is a phenomenon. We are led to believe it existed in the good old days, before competitive examinations and enforced athletics, and the press of the social struggle took all the elasticity and enthusiasm out of our young people, but most emotion is now obsolete! Cupid, in the nineteenth century, procures a microscope and finds bacilli on the lips of the beloved!'

'Dr. Janet grows romantic,' said the Lady Rowan Gowan, with a civil sneer.

'No, my dear lady, I do not,' the other answered gravely, 'it is a sentiment of which my neuter-nature is incapable, though it is conscious of its missing faculty. And now I, having stood very much too long upon "the band-waggon," as our American friends have it, abdicate willingly in favour of some more capable performer. But first let me say I forgive you all for your civilised shortcomings, because I find you so individually charming.'

And with a delightful smile, and a gracious sweep

of her fine hands, she marshalled her guests into groups with a discrimination and tact that pleased all.

‘Such an agreeable woman,’ the groups assented, ‘but *so* eccentric.’

‘How *can* people be neuter?’ Lady Stanton protested plaintively; ‘only houses and furniture are neuter.’

‘And babies?’ replied a smart, keen-eyed little matron; ‘one always speaks of the baby as “it”!’

‘And what do you say?’ Dr. Liveing asked of Phyllis, as she sat quiet by the half-opened window, whence the night air entered coolly, thinking more of her impending plunge into the current of medical life than of Dr. Janet’s psychological theories. ‘Are you satisfied to be a neuter?’

‘Dr. Janet says neuters are the best workers,’ she replied, looking up to him with serious eyes.

‘And is that all your ambition?’ he asked carelessly. ‘Do you never mean to disprove Janet’s axioms by falling in love?’

‘Oh, never!’ she cried vehemently. ‘I never, never shall!’



## CHAPTER XV.

Earth's crammed with heaven  
And every common bush afire with God ;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes :  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

PHYLLIS entered presently upon her medical studies. And what a shadowed wilderness and chaos was her mind in those first months, ere scientific light came to it! To begin with, what a jumble of tiresome terms seemed the jargon of anatomy! What marvels of verbose detail, what specialties of nomenclature! And then what surfaces, tuberosities, foramina and intricacies of bone; what branchings, anastomoses and arterial subdivisions; what infinitesimal strange habits of white and red blood corpuscles; what intimate, keen consciousness of vaso-motor centres; what moulding of joints and bindings of ligament; what supple, strong swathings of muscle and poisonings of limb; what wonders of assimilation and circulation; in

short, what a boundless bewilderment and confusion it all was.

So, likewise, with the whole morass of science and fact included by the term medicine.

And how much or how little its methods would teach her of the inherent wonders of living, she paused, with awe, to consider.

What could she learn of the mighty processes of life by severing the senseless, rigid limbs, which these had stirred?

How much could she comprehend of the attributes and strange complexities of nervous tissue by dissecting out its silken threads?

Would the springs of human thought and impulse, leap out at the touch of her knife amid the brain-cells?

Were the muscles and tendons of this dead, mutilated hand any clue to the living, loving clasp of its fingers?

There was much, and yet there seemed so little, left of this poor piece of humanity; its facts were so patent, but the gateway of their source was shut!

The dead eyes had shrunk in their sockets, freezing upon the secrets of life. The blue lips were sealed with death's kiss, the tongue lay still that could tell a wondrous tale.

Phyllis, one day, when the first horror of her

anatomical investigations was diminishing, touched with a pitying caress the brow of a dead girl, whose white limbs she was dissecting, and wondered with a sudden dread if she, whose frame a pauper death had converted into subject for the student-knife, could see the mutilation of her body.

‘Poor thing,’ she cried in the silence of the room, while tears fell down her own warm cheeks on to the shrunken, pauper breast, ‘had she no friend to lay her in the earth and leave her quiet?’

She did not know how little society holds sacred its pauper dead. She did not know how poverty is a wheel on which the living, human heart is wrung and its dead limbs broken.

That the girl had been a sinner, and had not turned her moral deviations to material account, was reason enough for the world that she should come to a shameful end, as, dismissing her and her kind, it turns aside to lay its wreaths on the silver-plated coffin of some other, who died luxuriously in his sins.

Medicine probes a good many of the world’s wounds, and sees its ulcer-spots!

Phyllis never overcame her distaste for the dissecting room; she never learnt to make ‘charming dissections’ of the arterial and nervous systems of her dead fellows, nor lost, in scientific fervour, her sense that the dead heart and eyes and limbs

were human things, and had ministered to the needs and wishes of a human soul.

Her cheeks flushed with shameful crimson, and the tears came when, in the course of study, she learnt from the critical, cold lips of science, that the human eye is but a 'very poor optical instrument.'

It was as if the tiny creature had flippantly struck at his God !

Was the eye nothing more than this—the eye that reveals the mammoth wonders of the earth and its tiniest perfections ; the eye that illumines the mind with the marvels of light, and charms it with harmonies of hue ; the eye that looks faith and courage and hope into its brother's ; which flames with passion and freezes with grief ; lightens with laughter ; clings with longing ; radiates joy and is glorified by love ; the eye in whose well truth lives, and purity lies like a pearl ; in whose clear shining the soul swims ; the eye which, though the limbs fail, and death's hand hold the heart, still looks its faithful last upon the beloved ; the eye that mirrors the countless untold shades of human character ; which shows the countless untold depths of human thought ; the eye, in which we read the devotion of parent, husband, wife and child, marking their mood and the measure of their love ; this marvellous, dear, beautiful thing, we,

in our infinite littleness, have put on our glasses to inspect, and have with frigid arrogance dismissed as being but a poor attempt on the part of our Creator !

Phyllis dropped her lids upon the blasphemy, and burnt the page it blackened.

‘She will never make a doctor,’ some of her companions said to Dr. Janet ; ‘she will never think as men do and be essentially scientific.’

‘She will never forget that human nature is not comprised by anatomy, physiology and chemistry,’ the latter answered sharply, ‘and I do not wish her to think as men think, else what is the use of nature having specialised her faculties? The very reason nature makes us different, is that we may bring to bear upon her problems totally different processes and modes of thought. As we shall when you women have got over your first folly of apeing men. Why, bless my soul ! Miss Grant, what, in the name of goodness, has come to you that you should shave your pretty head and don a billycock? Gracious ! isn’t the world ugly enough, but you must all spoil the little beauty God has given you with your preposterous shirt-fronts and coat-tails !’

And Dr. Janet strode off savagely, specially vexed that morning because a newly-entered student, whom her critical eye had approved as being charmingly fresh-faced and feminine, had

sacrificed her curls and coils to a prevailing hideous fashion, and had hidden the delicate, womanly curves of her figure under the stiff straitness of a starched shirt.

‘They are all alike!’ she cried, exasperated; ‘their best ambition is to be neuters, and I should like to know what is to become of their babies. What in the name of sanity can be done for the poor little wretches’ hydrocephalic heads and mushy spines?’

Thus, Phyllis was not any way encouraged to adopt the mannish tone of some of her companions, and indeed she had but little inclination thereto.

‘The world is going mad,’ Dr. Janet would announce, when some new departure in this direction had been perpetrated by her sex. ‘Women are, themselves, justifying their long slavery, by showing how little they are fit for freedom. Because they have now a liberty approaching that of the other sex, they know no better what to do with it, than to weakly imitate their quondam masters, making fools of themselves, bicycling, cricketing and footballing. It’s unseemly—absolutely indecent, for the mothers of families to be running the fields like tomboys.’

‘But,’ her listener ventured, ‘they think the only way to prove their equality with men, is to beat

them on their own ground. Men seem to have had only a very poor opinion of us, so long as we had not shown that we could reach their intellectual and physical standards.'

'Fiddlededee! It's well enough for a few to prove it to them, but all women needn't cut off their noses to spite their faces. The amazon is a monstrosity, whether she be so on the physical or intellectual plane. She may be very remarkable, but she's a distortion. We spoil both men and women when we pervert them into prodigies. What we call talent, partakes more often of the nature of a cerebral tumour, than of healthy brain development. What business have we to demand that a fellow-creature's resources shall be spent in making him a clever fiddler, or a wrangler, or a rhymster, or any other mental mountebank, when, by so doing, we leave his humanity bankrupt; make him a poor little pigmy tacked on to a big talent? Isn't the man of more account than his art? Where the art is genius, where the powers are so focussed that they lift spontaneously above the common level, it's a different thing. You can no more dam the current of such powers, than you can stay the swell of a tidal wave, but that is no reason why all the little sheep-ponds should run themselves dry in attempting to raise tidal waves. And now we women are ganging the same gait.

We think it finer to be crack batters or bicyclers than to be good women. And God help the race whose mothers have no worthier ambitions !’

So Phyllis continued her studies with the bug-bear of neuterdom before her eyes, with Dr. Janet’s anathemas against unsexing herself filling her ears. Yet she would have found her tasks easier, could she have thrown off the control of her woman-nature and have worked with a dispassionate mind. For example, in the study of botany, it was always a difficulty to her to see a leaf or flower from its purely ‘lanceolate,’ ‘petiolate’ or ‘pinnatifid’ standpoints ; like a subtle, shadowy wraith, the fading, dissected blossom clung about her sense, telling her truths that science left untouched.

‘It’s all the better, Phyl,’ her mentor reassured her, when she plaintively set forth her difficulties. ‘Don’t try, for goodness’ sake, to see things differently. It might tell in examinations, but it won’t tell in life. You don’t want your brain to be divided up into little water-tight compartments, dully crammed and labelled ; it should be a system of intelligences, intimately linked, so that the least touch upon one shall send a responsive wave through all and make your thought a perfect and completed one. The scientific doctor never cures his patients. He treats a conglomeration of



muscle, brain and bone cells, and disremembers the man, and after all the man is about the most important thing in that mass of anatomical and physiological fact !'

## CHAPTER XVI.

Fair was she to behold, that maiden of seventeen summers.

AMONG those masculine professors whose privilege it was to instruct the feminine unlearned in some of the mysteries of medicine, was Dr. Liveing.

So that the first evening, when Phyllis, note-book and pencil in hand, took her place in the lecture-room, she was not a little surprised to find the dark face that had interested her in the guise of her chemical lecturer.

He glanced at her once or twice during his address, with a somewhat quizzical look, as she sat, with her pencil between her lips, vainly attempting to condense into a note some portion of his teaching.

But the subject was new, and its nature vastly bewildering, so that, in spite of a simplicity of style which characterised him, she found herself at the conclusion with only a few fragmentary statistics

which were scarcely a fair representation of his sufficiently exhaustive address.

‘I shall never do anything with it,’ she told herself, as she walked dejectedly homeward, conscious that her day’s work had accomplished little, beyond dazing her and making her head ache badly.

Dr. Liveing called that evening to see his cousin, and, in passing through the hall, caught a glimpse of a pale, puzzled face in the library, anxiously bent over its books.

He knocked and entered.

‘May I come in a moment, Miss Adam? How do you do? Perhaps I can give you a few hints on note-taking. If one is not used to lectures, it takes a little while to get into making an abstract of them.’

‘You are very kind,’ Phyllis answered, giving him her hand. ‘I am afraid I am very stupid, but it all seems so confusing.’

‘It is at first. Perhaps you will let me see your notes of my lecture this evening. I will look them over with pleasure.’

Phyllis flushed.

‘Oh, indeed, I would rather not. I felt so dull. I was able to write so little.’

She hurriedly shut and pushed away the shiny, black-bound book she had been poring over.

‘This is it, then,’ he said putting his hand upon

it, her action having plainly indicated it. He took it gently from her reluctant fingers.

On the first page he read, in a clear, girlish hand, 'My notes on Chemistry. Dr. Paul Liveing's Lectures. Oct. 8.—Lecture I.—Definitions. Constitution of air, water and things. Elements. Compounds. Elements, simple—gold, zinc, etc.,—can't be split up. Compounds, oxygen and hydrogen—water is composed of. Air, a mixture—not a compound. Carbonic acid gas. Lavoisier, combustion, phosphorous, nitrogen, symbols and atomic weights.'

'Ah!' he said, with amusement playing at the corners of his mouth, as he glanced over these disjointed remarks. 'And so this is all the information I managed to impart in the course of an hour's talking. I think I must re-model Lecture I. of my series and endeavour to cram a few more facts into it. What do you say, Miss Adam?'

She had stood abashed and with downcast eyes before him as he read.

'I wish you had not seen it. Indeed, indeed, I am very much ashamed of being so stupid.'

'Not at all,' he said composedly. 'I do not note here a single inaccuracy—that is, according to our present scientific light, an illumination which generally lasts no longer than a few years, and is then

extinguished ignominiously to make room for some other.'

'Oh, pray don't,' Phyllis pleaded abjectly, as his ironic pleasantry set the hot blood tingling in her cheeks.

Then her tormentor's manner changed. He sat down.

'Now,' he said kindly, 'let me go over it with you. I know it all sounds like sheer nonsense when one begins.'

And he patiently and at length explained the several points that had perplexed her, and in a short time, she was making intelligent notes of what he had said some hours before.

'Now, it is quite clear,' she told him gratefully, thanking him with eyes and tongue. 'I shall never be so dull again. And you have made it so interesting—I quite look forward to the next lecture.'

'And *I* do,' he said to himself as he closed the door behind him. 'By-the-bye, I should like to marry that little girl when she grows up!'

He drew a deep—a very deep breath—'I wonder what she would think about it!' he added.

'Who's your little friend downstairs?' he asked later of his cousin, after they had talked awhile.

She looked sharply at him.

'You let my little friend alone,' she replied

severely. 'She's nothing to you. I've made up my mind that child shall be one of the first doctors in London. She has fine abilities, and is being trained according to my notions. And you will see what the true woman-mind, properly educated, will bring to your materialistic science.'

'In this case,' he said drily, 'I am more likely to see what the true woman-mind, properly educated, will bring to some fellow's home.'

Dr. Janet's dark brows lowered.

'In this case,' she replied, 'you will certainly see nothing of the kind. Phyllis—'

'Is Phyllis her name?' he interrupted.

'Yes; what have you to say to it?' she queried aggressively, flashing the same sharp look at him.

'Oh, nothing, nothing at all,' was the careless answer.

Dr. Janet was silent. Then she said gravely,—

'Paul, look here. I want to talk to you. The girl is beautiful and a sweet girl. And I am very fond of her. And I will not have her interfered with. She is my adopted child—I mean, later on, to make her my partner. And I warn you'—a quick anger filled her face and voice,—'Paul, I warn you to let her alone. I won't have you make love to her—I won't have any man make love to her. I want her for myself.'

Paul laughed a little grimly.

‘And what have you to offer her?’ he asked. ‘A woman like that is made for love and home and children. She isn’t meant for skeletons and pharmacopœias. You can ride your hobby-horse to death, my cousin, but she isn’t the sort for your journey. I say,’ and he glanced at the dark, set face before him with as dark and set a face, ‘I guess it will be a hard fight between you and the other fellow.’

‘Paul, there can be no other fellow.’ Janet hesitated; then she said, as if forming a sudden resolution, ‘I don’t want to, but it seems I must tell you her story.’

‘For goodness’ sake, don’t,’ he answered shortly. ‘What in the name of all that’s mysterious is it to me?’

‘You had better know. The truth is—’ she began reluctantly,—

He got up quickly and held out his hand. ‘Cousin, I’m going. I can’t stand being harrowed up by revelations. Good-night, Janet.’

Then he corrected the abruptness of his leave-taking.

‘I’m sorry,’ he said with a conciliatory smile. ‘I’m done up, and a little short about the temper. Good-night; I’ll be a better boy next time.’

He went quickly down the stairs, turning his head as he passed the library door.

Phyllis still sat there, her soft face illumined by the lamp-light. Her expression was now one of pleased and absorbed interest. The puzzled dejection had passed away, and she was plunged deep in the mysteries of oxygen and its compounds.

‘If she wants her story told, she shall tell it herself,’ he said, snubbing the curiosity that pricked his mind.

The sight of her reassured him.

‘That isn’t a mask for any very deep depths of atrocity,’ he decided.

Nevertheless, no man likes the woman, in whom he is interested, to have a story ; and the suspicions forced into growth by the recollection of his first meeting with her on that morning of her flight—for he had recognised her at once—by her sudden, unexplained appearance under his cousin’s roof ; and now, by the latter’s intimation that some mystery existed, these suspicions, though loyally repressed, somewhat insistently reared their heads.

After he had left, Janet sat very quiet by her fire.

There was a sombre gloom upon her strong features, which the fitful leaping of the firelight served to exaggerate.

It may come to that,’ she was thinking ; ‘ Paul is



right. Some man will fall in love with her. And she—she's very much of a woman; how shall I be able to steer her safely? My creed is to pass her through the furnace, unscathed; to bring her out on the other side as womanly of heart and mind as she is now. But if I do this, will it be possible to absorb her so keenly in her work that she will want nothing else? Yet, it must be. If she want more, she must go to her husband. She is already bound. Goodness only knows,' Janet concluded irritably, 'how the thing will turn out. Someone's fingers will be burnt!'

'Listen, Phyl,' she remarked rather ruefully to the girl, when she came later to say good-night. Her cheeks were feverishly hot and her eyes bright with the vision of unconquered realms which the wonders of chemistry had roused in her imagination. 'Phyl, you'll have to become a neuter, I'm afraid. It's your only chance.'

'But, Aunt Janet,' she objected wonderingly, 'that is just what you are always warning me against. And besides, I object—strongly. Oh, you don't know how charmed I am with chemistry. I have been delighted with it this evening since Dr. Liveing showed me it all so clearly.'

'At the lecture?'

'No! not at the lecture; that was only puzzling. But on his way to you this evening, the library door

was open and he came in and put it all right, and now it seems so simple, and it is so awfully charming.'

'Now, I wonder which it may be that is "so awfully charming"?' Dr. Janet pondered as she went upstairs to bed—'Paul, or the chemistry'

## CHAPTER XVII.

All love is sweet,  
Given or returned. Common as light is love,  
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.

They who inspire it most are fortunate,  
As I am now ; but those who feel it most  
Are happier still.

PAUL'S cousin resolved that her *protégée* should come as rarely as possible within range of his dangerous dark eyes.

Such a complication of affairs, as might result from their magnetic action, assumed so perplexed an aspect in her mind that she determined to do her utmost towards keeping the two apart.

But even she, as dean, could not stay the wheel of college routine, which, week in, week out, brought the studious Phyllis, with her note-book and pencil, to the circling benches of the lecture hall, where, for an hour or more, the young professor held the attention of his class.

Having herself proposed him as a suitable suc-

cessor to the superannuated Dr. McMalgam, she could not now suggest his prompt dismissal. Once or twice she made up her mind to tell him of Phyllis's marriage, but this she was very loth to do.

'After all,' she reflected, 'this is only a storm in a teacup I am brewing. Phyllis is a sensible girl, and is far too keen on her work to be thinking of lovers.

'And Paul—well, he has reached the age of thirty-two without showing much inclination towards matrimony. I wonder if my brain is beginning to soften!'

However, she threw an eye occasionally upon the couple, but there was not much information to be gathered from Dr. Liveing's impassive face, nor from Phyllis's enthusiastic one.

The girl therefore went on learning from his lips the wonders of chemical reaction, the marvels of volumetric analysis, and all the perplexities of molecular movement. She saw the smouldering charcoal leap into light when plunged in oxygen; she saw the transformations and discharges of colour and character consequent on chemical interchange. She saw the fairy rings of phosphuretted hydrogen form and float up to the ceiling, overhang awhile, with tremulous, shadowy motion, the lecturer's dark head, then slowly, like a mystic circle, fade and vanish.

She held her ears when the combination of two substances demonstrated noisily the intensity of their attraction, and held her breath with excitement while the professor proved, by the faint burnish of a vaporous, metallic stain, that a suspected fluid contained arsenical poison.

It was such delight and wonder to her student senses this marvellous science that dived into the mysteries of nature, and divided her minutest particles, making her secrets play in flame and colour.

And Dr. Liveing was he who held the key to all these marvels, and bade the passive things display the properties which seemed a kind of life in them.

Where before were dulness of hue and inert matter, a wave of his hand was the signal for movement, colour and light.

He would have laughed, perhaps not overpleased, if he had known the character of conjurer he took in Phyllis's mind. He would certainly have preferred the *rôle* of earnest scientist to that of a magician charming chemical atoms to leap and rouse the girl's wonder.

But Phyllis glowed with pleasure at these manifestations of man's power, and if man in this case did not assume a personal form, it was maybe because her admiration and delight were so unbounded as to be incapable of focus.

Among the lines of feminine bonnets ranged be-

fore him on his lecture evenings, Liveing's glance rested most frequently upon one in the fourth row, beneath whose modest brim and bows looked out a nervous face, with shining eyes and rapt interest.

Her pencil did not now lie idle between her lips, but ran with busy rapidity over the pages of her note-book as she jotted down the problems he unravelled.

None were more unconscious than she of the attention she aroused, and, indeed, the apparent abstraction of the professor's gaze, and his perfect mental concentration upon his subject would have baffled a keener eye than hers.

A woman is usually preternaturally sharp to detect interest in herself, harboured by one of the other sex, but Phyllis's mind was too intent upon the wonders of molecular vibration and atomic weight to be capable of noting the quiver of a dark eye meeting hers, or measuring the pressure of a hand-clasp.

Liveing was a reserved and self-contained man. The delicate face of his girl-pupil was the face which alone of others he had looked upon, or believed it likely he should look upon, had photographed its image on his heart, shadowing itself silently, as the impress of a sun-picture, upon sensitised tablets.

But for all that he knew well enough she was

but a girl, unready for love, incapable of comprehending it.

With the strong tenderness of a large nature and the quick intuitiveness of a fine one, he set aside the passion that was springing in him, put out of her sight the impulse she gave to his emotions—emotions she could not have understood—and met her with a friendliness she understood and returned.

Many an evening, on his way to Dr. Janet, he opened the library door and sat for a quiet half-hour beside his pupil, assisting her studies and listening with a calm face to her girlish confidences.

Phyllis, looking into his kind eyes, little knew the strength of feeling in the man, little guessed how often, with a ruthless hand upon himself, he beat down the fiery impulse in him to abandon his reserve, and still his passion on her quiet lips. She wondered sometimes at a curious roughness in his voice; she did not know it for the break of rising, sudden-checked emotion, like the ragged edge of cresting water.

Sometimes Paul passionately felt, if he should stretch his arms and take her to him, his heart's pulse must surely waken her; but looking into the sincere, straight eyes, he knew he would only frighten the sleep of a child, not waken a woman.

And he wanted for his love, the love of a woman, not the immature affection of a girl.

Were there more such lovers, there would be fewer dead or bitter-hearted women, women whose emotional growth has been rudely spoilt and will put forth no more flowers.

It takes longer than the world thinks for a woman's affections to reach their maturity.

'She will come to it,' Paul told himself again and again. 'There are no shallows in those deep eyes. She will come to it and come to me. Oh, Phyllis, Phyllis!'

Dr. Janet knew nothing of those evening lessons. Had she passed, she might have seen through the half-opened door her *protégée's* bright head, pondering problems beside the teacher's dark one; but Dr. Janet spent her quiet evenings by herself, seldom stirring from her drawing-room. Here she would remain, enjoying the mild diversion of her favourite game, or sitting with idle hands.

'It is the only way to recover one's equilibrium which life to-day does so much to spoil,' she would say. 'I have no patience with persons who are for ever on the move. People who can't spend a day or even a year intelligently doing nothing, are in a morbid state of mind and health. It is the nerve irritability that precedes decay—it is nothing like wholesome energy. Nature has two modes of



manifestation—force and rest. It is only we poor creatures who are such fools as to believe in perpetual motion.’

So she would sit quiet in her room, three evenings out of seven—reserving these free of engagements—once a week dispensing a hospitable and delightful dinner.

To these dinners, Liveing, her favourite, was generally bidden, but Phyllis, never.

Though the subject was not again broached, Dr. Janet had taken fright at her cousin’s suggestion of the girl finding a lover.

‘She is better by herself,’ she decided ; ‘every day rivets a further link in the chain of habit and interest her work is forging round her. Her position is so anomalous. She has herself made it such that she cannot meet society upon a fair footing, so she had better keep out of it.’

So Phyllis, on these festive occasions, remained at her studies, which the stopping of carriages, the ringing of bells and passage of servants and guests disturbed but little.

One evening there was considerable exaggeration of these sounds.

There had been men at work all day about the house adorning it with flowers and lamps and fairy-lights ; and the large drawing-room had undergone such a scrubbing and rubbing and pol-

ishing of its parquet flooring, that it shone like a mirror, and slipped treacherously beneath Phyllis's feet as she stepped across it.

For Dr. Janet had yielded to the entreaties of her young acquaintance and was condescending to the frivolous sphere of a dance.

'My brain must certainly be softening at last,' the good lady grumbled as she was scuffled ignominiously from room to room by encroaching workmen, till, in her comfortable house, there was not a space where she could find quiet; not a nook where ferns and scarlet baize and fanciful illuminations did not scout the intrusion of her rational form.

'I can feel it coming on, and it must be coming on badly to betray such a hard-headed creature as myself into these inconsistencies. It's the last time, however, and so I can tell you young people I positively won't be caught tripping again.'

Here her foot slid dangerously along a polished board, as if to deride herself and her determination.

The young people thus apostrophised, would not have felt greatly alarmed had they heard her.

They had heard very much the same thing season after season, yet they succeeded always in deluding their protesting old friend into the trap of their persuasions, and the pitfall of her own soft-heartedness.

She grumbled for weeks afterwards, declaring that their frivolous feet had so scared her Æsculapian wits that she had no peace in her house for the memory of their laughter and young nonsense. Not a stethoscope in her possession could be found ; not a text-book could she lay her hand upon ; not a thermometer would register a normal temperature after the heated volatile atmosphere to which it had been subjected.

‘ And as for patients,’ she wound up, ‘ why, I have scarcely taken a fee since. And little wonder ! Who would trust their lives into the hands of a ridiculous old creature, who loses her head at intervals and allows her house to be converted into a bear-garden ! ’

Nevertheless, as the season came round, Messrs. Tent & Awning invariably received her commands to make ready her drawing-room floor for the skipping of their light feet ; to convert her landings into curtained, dim-lit cages, where the cubs might kiss ; to bank up ferns and flowers upon her professional mantel-shelves ; to drape her sober stair-cases, by which so many leaden-hearted patients passed, in order that the ursine couples might flirt in comfort ; and especially to supply her tables with such good bait that the young bears should growl in ecstatic appreciation !

And amid all these mirthful delinquents, Janet

roamed as mirthful as any, a genial glow on her genial face and a warmer at her heart.

Only one shadow overcast her pleasant mind, and that was a regret that Phyllis could not share the fun ; Phyllis, who was sweeter and prettier than all the pretty and sweet girls to be there, her own act had severed from the happy, thoughtless pleasures of her years, because these held possibilities that in her case could never be realised.

‘You would not care to join them?’ she had asked her tentatively, knitting her strong brows perplexedly.

‘Oh no, aunt, thank you,’ was the reply, given in all sincerity. ‘I shall be happy enough with my books. You know my first exam. is only two months off, and I want to do you credit.’

Then, with the perversity of perverse human nature, though she had wished for no other answer, Dr. Janet objected testily,—

‘Why, bless the girl ! she’s becoming a regular book-worm. Haven’t you any youth and young life in you that you want nothing but ’ologies?’

‘I will come if you wish it, dear,’ Phyllis whispered soothingly ; ‘I did not know you wished it.’

‘I don’t,’ Dr. Janet answered shortly. The bright, beautiful face turned to her, as they stood beside a tall lamp, had a charm that struck at the other’s heart like a sudden threat.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Then black despair,  
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown  
Over the world in which I moved alone.

PHYLLIS sat upstairs on a little landing at the top of the house, her books and papers round her.

The library—her usual sanctum—was for that evening dismantled, its sombre character so glorified that when she returned home, after her day's work in the College, she stood bewildered on its threshold.

The shelves of serious books were hidden by festoons of coloured silks ; the leathern desk on which she penned abstruse theses, had been transformed into a bed of moss and flowers, and a dainty table, spread with sweetmeats and other delicacies, occupied her favourite corner.

The heavy, rotatory chair, which tempted her occasionally from her work, to test its revolutionary powers, had been removed, and the room was lined with rout-seats.

Phyllis scarcely knew herself amid this trans-mogrification of familiar things, but she stood, pleased to admire them.

Then, with a little sigh, which was, however, choked down bravely, she turned away, and with her strap of books beneath her arm, went slowly up the gaily-lighted staircase.

It was certainly all very pretty, she thought—the flowers and Japanese lanterns with their mysterious, tremulous motion ; the twinkling fairy-lights ; the silk-draped balustrades ; the oriental divan-like landings, and the tented balcony whence the night air entered coolly ; while already the bandsmen, in their bright uniforms, were arriving, and began, with much show of business, to place their chairs and divest their instruments of travelling-gear. A peep into the supper-room had shown her the long, hospitable table, a-shine with dainty glass and silver, bearing adown its snowy length the fruits of the earth, and flesh, and fowl, and every manner of delicacy ; and over all, tall palms shed a fantastic shade upon the flowers scattered down the board.

Small tables were ranged about, each accompanied by chairs for two, and upon these tables busy men were placing silver and glass and wine, and bowls of crimson roses.

From another room issued the fragrant scent of tea and coffee, which blended refreshingly with the

more ethereal perfume of the flowers, while there was heard the cheerful clink of china, the swift patter of hurrying feet, the murmuring whisper of anxious functionaries of the commissariat ; and presently the twang and shriek of instruments in process of tuning, protesting, as it were, at being waked from a slumber, where the tension appertaining to key-note existeth not.

All this was a pleasant overture to pleasanter festivities, and woke a lonely feeling in Phyllis's heart, as she passed, tired, up the stairs, rising ever above and farther away from them.

So she climbed with a lagging step, and many a down glance to the planes below, till she reached the distant landing which had been arranged for her.

She had resisted, with a wilful petulance, her appetite for a cup of the coffee, that wafted so hospitable an invitation to her.

A baseless, foolish little sense of injury crept into her mind, as, for the first time, perhaps, she fully realised that there was a bright, pleasant side to life from which she had cut herself off.

'I have nothing to do with it all,' she reflected. 'My work is to be me, and I am not wanted there. Music and dancing and gaiety are not for a bookworm.'

Then she gave a little startled cry, for in throw-

ing herself crossly into her pet revolving chair, which, like herself, had been banished thither, she struck against the bony arm of the skeleton that, in its conventional state of suspension, generally inhabited her study, and formed the sole companion of so many of her evenings.

She recognised in it an old friend. Perhaps it was habit which had cast a sort of companionable look over its rudimentary features, but that ghastly sardonic grin, characteristic of skulls, which seems to be saying till the end of time, 'You, too, rosy and young, must come to this!' had generally assumed, in Phyllis's mind, the nature of a smile—a little grim, perhaps, but not at all unfriendly or objectionable.

But to-night she felt differently.

'You are the symbol of my life,' she cried a little bitterly, and a coldness shivered through her as she looked up at the gaunt white thing which hung so stiffly from its gibbet.

The flame of the lamp, caught by a sudden draught, flared murkily, flashing a flickering ray across the denuded gums and teeth. It seemed for a moment to smile with a horrible comradeship, and the light wind lifted a bony finger, as if with the hint of a hand-clasp.

'Oh, you are horrid to-night,' the girl said, shuddering, and she turned her back upon it.



Then she added after a pause, during which she sat looking into the darkness, fitfully and uncongenially broken by the sounds of lively movement from below, 'Everything is horrid to-night and I am worst of all. I am an ungrateful, idle, bad-tempered brute. That is about what I am. Aunt Janet, dear Aunt Janet has done everything for me, and now I am railing at all that her kindness has given. What right have I to her kindness? What right have I to even a corner in her dear house? What would have become of me, had it not been for her generosity, which took me in, a stranger, a beggar, and for more than two years has treated me as a daughter? Oh, Aunt Janet, I wish you could whip me for my wickedness.'

But repentance, which heaps up upon the sinner the heavy enormity of his sins, howsoever salutary it may be for his soul, only sinks him further into the slough of despond.

So Phyllis did not mend matters, nor succeed in regaining a more cheerful mood when she thus reproached herself.

She remained with her books before her, bitter and unhappy.

The tempting dinner, which was brought her presently, she left untouched, taking only a cup of tea.

She had worked diligently and with enthusiasm for nearly two years, and was now preparing for her first examination.

Until this evening, though she had many times murmured and sometimes wept over her ceaseless tasks, things had never before taken so dismal a shape.

All healthy-minded young people feel bitterly the gall of the student-chain. It may be a wholesome discipline, but it is a chafing and a leaden one; and Phyllis, though they called her a book-worm, bored through her pages with frequently a very butterfly thrill and young flutter at her heart.

And the nearness of examination, raising the tension of her mind, had put a strain of anxious haste into her work, a temporary reaction from which high-strung state, now plunged her into depression.

Even the thought of her one-day husband, which had stood her in good stead before, this evening failed to rouse her.

‘Why should I try to be different from other people?’ she communed; ‘other women marry men they don’t care for, and laugh and are happy. Downstairs to-night, I daresay, there will be girls not older than I, who married without caring, and they will enjoy themselves as much as anyone else.’

It's no good fighting windmills—they can hit harder than you !'

By which it will appear that she was very 'down' indeed.

Was her next consideration the bright colour that was making discords with her sad-hued thought ?

Was this the thread, which, pulling hither and thither, was puckering the fabric of reflection into a hopeless tangle ?

If so, none suspected it less than herself. If so, Heaven help her to smooth again that tangled skein of heart, and life, and thought !

'*He* will be there,' she said, presently, with a quiver of the lip. 'And I have not seen him for so long. I wonder why he is offended ?'

The reason for Paul's defection, for so it seemed to her, was to be found in a sudden press of practice which had left him but few leisure moments to devote to his *quondam* pupil.

Moreover, he was growing weary of a quest which, after so long, promised so little, and the visits which he did not guess she prized were becoming, as his love strengthened, fuller of struggle and discontent.

'I may as well give it up,' he concluded, looking into her too friendly eyes. 'She will love ; but, apparently, I am not the man.'

So he saw her now but seldom. She had passed beyond the range of his lectures ; the sensitive face, which had seemed, as he thought, with its tendrils of bright hair about it, like a white wild-rose, no longer came to charm him, and he knew first how she had clung about his heart, when only her image was left.

Sometimes he met her for a moment, in a hall or passage, and replied to the sudden pleasure of her eyes with rather a grim bow of recognition.

‘ I shall be pleased always to regard you as a brother, is in every pleasant line and friendly look,’ he told himself bitterly. ‘ I am much obliged, my pupil, but you may keep it for someone else. It is not quite to my taste. Paul Liveing, you’ll have to go to the schools to learn how to win a woman’s heart. You’ve been two years at the study, and now find yourself miserably ploughed. Do you feel the iron go over you ? You are sent down, my friend, and you may as well grin, because you’ve got to bear it !’

## CHAPTER XIX.

And we shall sit at endless feast,  
Enjoying each the other's good :  
What vaster dream can hit the mood  
Of love on earth ?

PHYLLIS sat pondering and worrying, thrusting herself deeper and deeper into the swamps of melancholy, as the festivities below approached their climax.

She heard the strong sweet music of the band now swelling, now swooning in the subtle rhythm of the valse. She heard the laughter and gay-pitched talk of the dancers, and caught glimpses of them down the well of the staircase.

She could see the dainty silks and gauzes of the women's dresses, their be-curled and shining heads, their slender arms and white shoulders, the soft, swift flirt of their fans, the flash of their bangles and necklets, the delicate fair freshness of their bouquets, their gloved fingers resting daintily upon black-coated arms.

From her lonely watch-tower, it all looked so tempting and delightful, though closer observation might have shown a boredom on the smiling lips, a shallow ring in the laughter, envy, disappointment and chagrin beneath the silk and lace *corsages*. For what feast was ever given to which unbidden skeletons did not come?

But she knew little of social life, and took its charming aspect for all that it pretended; for the first time longing to be in its gay-seeming midst.

Had she known more, she would have been better content to sit alone on her landing and have her skeleton in the form which at that moment so disgusted her.

Tired of watching and wishing, she presently took up a book and began to read. But she was in no mood for such occupation. Personal thoughts and feelings chased one another wistfully between the lines of scientific fact. She threw down the volume with a sigh, and looked discontentedly at her dull, dark dress.

Yet, just then, this and herself were under observation of a pair of eyes, which found them fairer than any of the silken-clad, fair damsels below.

Dr. Living had been a late arrival, and after vainly waiting for Phyllis to appear, had concluded that she was otherwise engaged. He now came to seek her.

Why are you not dancing?' he asked, with a kind smile, reading without difficulty the depression in her attitude and expression.

'Oh, it is you?' she said, starting up.

He took her hand and held it a moment, looking down at the sensitive, tired face. There was a quick, faint flushing of her cheek, the dejected drooping of the mouth trembled into a little smile, such a smile as is more pitiful than tears, because it seems brimful of, and yet bravely holds them.

She showed more than pleasure in her eyes, and he saw it.

She drew her hand from his and put it to her throat with a quick, little catch of her breath.

There was a dangerous, short silence, during which Paul, with keen glance upon her, deliberated swiftly as to a 'to be or not to be.'

But she broke it by saying as she turned back to the table and nervously fingered her books:

'I have been feeling a little lonely and miserable. They seem so happy.'

'But why are you not with them?' he repeated. 'I have been waiting for you.'

'That was very nice of you, and I have been meanly reproaching everyone for not remembering me.'

Her eyes were full of tears now, as she looked at him straight, with that frank sincerity he hated.

Almost a frown passed over his face, as her look chilled him, like a dash of cold water.

‘Will you not come down?’ he asked with a sudden reserve. ‘I am leaving soon, but will find you partners before I go.’

‘Oh, you are not going yet,’ she said with a little appeal. Though she could not see him, it lessened her sense of loneliness, to feel his friendly presence in the house.

‘I can’t see that it matters,’ he replied grimly.

‘Oh, please don’t go,’ she cried hurriedly. ‘Will you not spare a little time to stay and talk to me? I have been so wretchedly in the blues. And you have not been to see us for so long. Have I offended you?’

He was mollified. Knowing every line and look of her face, he could not but recognise the quick and considerable change his coming had made in her.

The tired, miserable expression had given place to one of contentment. The anxious, weary lines were smoothed away.

‘Offended me?’ he echoed. ‘How could you? Why should you? I have been busy. But,’ observing the untouched meal, ‘have you had no dinner? You do not mean to say you have taken nothing since you came in?’

‘I was not hungry,’ she explained.



‘Wait a moment and we shall hear a different story.’ He went quickly downstairs. He returned shortly, bearing a tray, upon which were two plates of turkey with truffles, a dish of lobster salad, rolls and champagne.

‘Now,’ he said, ‘we shall see if you are not hungry. I am. I was waiting to take you in to supper, and have a fine appetite on. Do you like turkey?’

‘I do,’ Phyllis said with a pleased laugh. And clearing the table of its grave books, which Dr. Liveing hurled viciously into a corner, together they spread the board.

‘There is only one chair,’ she discovered gaily. How happy she felt now. All the dark clouds were gone.

Here was her professor, whom she had thought offended, cheerful and friendly and kind as ever.

‘I can sit on the table,’ he answered, and with a kick at the books, whose place he was usurping, he seated himself.

He had already dined, so that he did not need the good things he brought, as hungry Phyllis did, and he watched with satisfaction the speedy clearing of her plate. He opened the bottle and filled her glass.

Are you ready for some sweets?’

‘Oh, you must not trouble. Indeed, I have had enough.’

*I* have not, if you have,' he retorted, and disappeared again. Soon he brought jellies and ices and fruit.

'Now, then,' he persisted, 'let's enjoy ourselves.'

'We are doing that already,' she replied buoyantly, 'and have been for the last half-hour—since you came up.'

'It is much more fun up here than downstairs,' he said presently, watching with attentive eyes her bright, mobile face, as she talked and laughed in happy excitement. 'But I should like to have one dance with you.'

'In this?' she queried with a challenge, pointing to her dark gown.

'In that or anything,' he answered.

His breath for a moment came inconveniently fast.

'Ah, but it would never do,' she objected. 'I should be hunted out as Cinderella, with no fairy godmother to provide her with silk frocks, and turn her thick shoes into glass slippers. And, besides, I can't dance. I have not danced since I was as high as the table.'

'Couldn't you put on another gown—though nothing could look finer than that—and come down and let me teach you?'

'Oh, no, indeed I couldn't,' was the answer; 'I

don't like strange people, and have never been to a real ball.'

'By the way,' he said suddenly, 'you have not told me why you are not already there.'

'I have my work to do. I am going up in two months for my "first exam." And—and it does not suit my learned profession,' she added, with a whimsical smile.

'Indeed. You reflect on me when you say so. I also have a learned profession—in fact, I am a learned professor—yet I like dancing.'

'I am not like you,' she said seriously. 'You are so strong and self-contained, and—and different. To-morrow you will be able to take up your books or lecture or do anything, but I should not. My head would be in a whirl, and I should be going over it all again and find it difficult to settle to my work again.'

'But, why do you?' he asked savagely. 'Why are you stinting your happiness and enjoyment of life? Why are you going in for medicine? There are plenty of different sort of women who enjoy it and need nothing else.'

'I enjoy it. And often I need nothing else. The things one learns are so absorbingly interesting. It is only when I step out of it—then other feelings come with a rush and make study hard.'

‘Well, why will you?’ he persisted. ‘If you feel like that, it is a sign you are not meant for it.’

‘It is a sign I am idle and pleasure-loving. Aunt Janet says idleness is woman’s besetting sin, that women will do anything to escape work.’

‘I hate the word on a woman’s lips,’ he grumbled. ‘Goodness knows we men get enough of it. We grind, grind, grind, till there is no human nature left in us, and if you women are to do the same, and be for ever working and talking of work, the world will soon be a howling wilderness for all that’s worth having in it.’

‘They say, if all did their share, there would be only three hours’ daily work for each. So, if we women do our share, we are helping to lighten the general toil. So you men will be the gainers, you see.’

‘We ought to be much obliged, I know,’ he said drily. ‘But I, for one, don’t care for the prospect. I should not want my wife to do half my work.’

‘I have no doubt you would prefer her to be a kind of doll, to be always finely dressed, and pretty and smiling,’ she said with a little scorn.

‘Perhaps I would. Anyhow, I would rather have her a charming log than a stork. Storks devour one, and I’m a bit of a coward, Miss Phyllis.’

She looked at him with clear, serious eyes.

‘I suppose men are cowards about things we

don't fear,' she replied slowly. 'But men are much braver and greater than we are in many things. They go on finely doing their duty, and facing life with all its drudgery and routine, and every kind of matter-of-fact irksome thing.'

'Perhaps they do not find these so irksome.'

'Oh, but they must. There are the sunshine, and all the beautiful world tempting them, but they go steadily on, day after day, rain and cold, working long hours in stuffy offices and among commonplace people and things. It is these qualities of men I so admire—perhaps, because I fail in them. I think men are splendid to accept the continuous drudgery of their lives without question or complaint.'

'There is no doubt we are fine creatures,' he said cynically. 'But, perhaps, we don't deserve quite all the admiration you feel for the particular virtues you name. Perhaps the sunshine and the beautiful world, as you mean it, are not the strongest of our temptations, though these may be the ones we transfigure our saintly selves by resisting.'

'I don't know,' she answered. 'But I am often horribly tempted to throw over all my duties and be happy—really idle and happy for a year at least. And the worst of it is, Aunt Janet is willing that I should, if I feel like it. That strengthens the temptation; though, in a way, it makes it

impossible—impossible to disappoint her so, I mean.’

‘But you must not fashion your life according to the notion of another’s idea—another woman’s, that is. You have to live your life, and if you choose the wrong one, it means only unhappiness for you. I tell you, you are not the sort of woman for this kind of thing. Leave it to the neuters, as Aunt Janet calls them. There are plenty of women and to spare, who have no real home instincts, or that sort of feeling, and who only come to grief when they—when they do anything else. Throw it up, Miss Phyllis. It is all a mistake.’

His dark eyes were on her, and hers drooped.

‘No, no,’ she answered hastily, and she shrank back a little. ‘I have chosen my life. I am foolish to have spoken so. They are not real troubles, they are nothing more than stupid whims. Everyone has difficulties to contend against. But let us talk of something else, Dr. Liveing. I don’t want you to despise me utterly.’

‘I do not think that is likely,’ he replied, looking at her strangely.

‘And I do not mean it to be,’ she retorted, with a quick, little defiance. ‘I should not have told you. I might have pretended I was always resolute and self-contained like you, and then you would

have thought better of me, but I have let you see my weakness, because—because—'

'Because what, my pupil?'

His gaze was fastened on her face, as though he would perforce extract her answer ere he put into words the question that was forming on his lips.

'Because I thought you were my friend and would understand.'

'Am I not your friend?'

He moved a little nearer.

'Are you?'

'Try me!'

'Yes, yes,' she assented hastily. There was an electrical atmosphere about these monosyllabic brevities that alarmed her. 'You are, of course you are. But—but do let us talk of something else. You admit you don't despise me, and I have quite forgiven you.'

'Shall we seal the forgiveness, Phyllis?'

She did not guess the danger her lips were in.

He stood quite close to her now, pleased with a masculine exultancy at the dread that trembled through her, and 'dragged the long sweet lashes down.'

He waited. There was a startled, a hunted terror in her eyes, as these looked suddenly up at him with a wild appeal.

Then she made a last strong effort of escape. She rose quickly from her chair, and drew away.

‘I—I am very tired,’ she said, in a low, hopeless voice, all the happy thrill gone out of her face. ‘I think I will go to my room. Thank you so much for your kindness, Dr. Liveing. Good-night.’

She held out a cold, limp hand. He could not mistake the fact that he was dismissed. He bent gravely above the pallid, trembling fingers.

‘So that’s all over!’ he said hoarsely, as he went downstairs.

Then he captured a twelve-year-old niece whom he found in a corner cramming sweetmeats into her mouth.

He caught her round the waist and rushed her precipitately into the ball-room.

‘Come along, Silla,’ he cried, ‘come and dance, dance, dance!’ and he whirled her along in a mad galop.

‘Uncle Paul,’ she gasped, ‘stop it. I haven’t any breath left. Let me go—you are hurting me, and you look wicked in the face, like the picture of Ananias when the lightning hit him!’



## CHAPTER XX.

White steeds of ocean, that leap with a hollow and  
wearisome roar  
On the bar of ironstone steep, not a fathom's length from  
the shore,  
Is there never a seer nor sophist can interpret your wild  
refrain,  
When speech the harshest and roughest is seldom studied  
in vain?

Gathering, growing, and swelling, and surging, and  
shivering, say!  
What is the tale you are telling? What is the drift of  
your lay?

PHYLLIS passed her examination without that  
distinction she had striven for.

Since the evening of the dance she had worked  
with a feverish application and excitement, which  
did but little else than spoil her power to show the  
industry that had gone before.

She appeared before the examiners pale and  
harassed, with brilliant, excited eyes and a nervous  
tension in her bearing, which prevented her from  
acquitting herself more than tolerably.

‘You are ill, Phyllis,’ Dr. Janet had said, some weeks before, struck by a change in her.

‘No,’ she answered. ‘I am only tired.’

‘You shall throw away your books and get a holiday, and let the examination go. You can take it three months later.’

‘Oh, Aunt Janet,’ the girl cried wildly, ‘don’t talk of it. I cannot give it up. And I don’t want a holiday. I am only happy when I am working.’

‘The first symptom of neuterdom. Off you go and pack your trunks for a month at the sea. I will not have you spoil my plans by going over to the enemy.’

Then Phyllis threw an arm about her friend’s neck and entreated her.

‘I should break my heart. Indeed, indeed, I could not bear it put off. It is only another six weeks now.’

‘I have known many a splendid constitution ruined by “only another six weeks,”’ the other objected, but she gave in eventually to the girl’s persuasions.

After the examination she was sent, in the care of an old servant, to Bournemouth, in order to recruit her health and spirits.

She returned but little better.

A terrible restlessness had come upon her. She wandered feverishly from room to room.

She would escape from the house, go down to the sea, and pace swiftly to and fro along the shore until she was worn-out and faint with her exertions.

She would then lie quiet on her bed for hours—able to rest only when her powers were prostrate.

She sat on the pier at night, listening down to the wash of the water, as it babbled amid the iron columns, lifting and playing with the long weed that spread and floated like a woman's hair.

The salt strong breath of the sea stirs strange sympathies in some souls, murmuring subtle wisdoms, vague, sweet promises and truths.

Many secrets the sea now told her, and the salt wind dried the tears on her cheeks that its whisper drew there.

The mystery of the deep waters was in her eyes, which looked grey and moist over the moving expanse, the mystery of a mighty everlasting loneliness that throbs and wails, and beats its broken breast in a vast shuddering desolateness against the limits of eternity.

Sometimes for a space it is still, lapping peacefully the sun-kissed shore, and smiling from a million little waves and rippling lips.

Then it frets awhile and moans distressedly, till, on the unquiet bosom of its restlessness, the floating ships of men are tossed.

And again it rends itself and raves with boister-

ous fierce anger, and in the agony of its desire throws up white billowy arms and drags down lives to its death-clasp.

Then, wayward and fuming, it casts forth peevishly their bodies, broken and bruised in the clutch of its ceaseless, unsatisfied longing.

The sea says many things to those who hear, but always it tells its vast passionate loneliness—a loneliness of infinite mood and voice.

It is like a mighty sullen creature, heaven-doomed to a mateless eternity. Patient, crooning, babbling, laughing, hoping, at times, with a divine, fair peace ; then, in a sudden rebellious bitterness, tossing and beating its deep breast with foamy pitiless hands, lashing its great limbs against the chain of its enthrallment, moaning and crying with ten thousand tongues for the satisfaction of its unutterable desire.

Something of its wearying restlessness seemed to have got into the girl's soul. Some echo of its discontent woke, with shrill story of an eternal pain, the child-sleep of her nature, till the moaning secret cried through the hollows of her heart, and set it passionately throbbing.

Yet the multiform fret of the ocean drew her into its boundlessness. The presence of its greater tumult stilled her.

Her mind reached out to the vastness, aimless

and graspless, into the measureless solitude of untold miles.

Her soul fled forth from eye and ear, and laid itself over the shuddering waters, losing the pin-pricks of its little pain in the pulse of that mighty rhythm.

Wide upon the spanless space her nature sped, unfolding, with a sweet and swift abandon, till, out of the peace and the passion of its joy, her heart blossomed, putting forth tendrils of feeling, clasping and clinging with a fevered wistfulness.

Then, from the tremulous shimmer of the sea love came to her; and though she knew him not, he touched her with white wings and left her weeping. As with a languorous ocean-sickness her spirit swooned, and she lay, with still head and seeking eyes, looking far over the water-wilderness. For now first was a void at her heart, which only its wind-swept vastness and its tongueful plaint could fill.

All day long she stayed beside it, careless of wind or weather. To her it was always matchless, whether it played like a little child, or roared in mammoth rage.

Sometimes she would sleep in a lonely corner, the strong breeze throwing her hair across her face and freshening her cheek. Then the murmur of the waves would get into her mind and look out from her eyes, till their greyness seemed to change

its colour with the sea's mood, and take on its fathomlessness as men's do who live with it.

She needed these quiet days the more because her nights were unquiet. In the silence of her room she could hear the crying of her nature, and fretted with the tingle of its fever as she lay awake and tossed upon her bed.

Something had come to her—an inarticulate complaining, a fashionless yearning which swelled in her heart, and sometimes broke up sobbing from her mouth.

She stretched her arms to the formless night, when the darkness whispered round her, and clung and wept for her beloved sea, with its fathomless sorrow and smile.

She sat up listening into the shadows, to breathe refreshed when she caught its cry, the sounding of its splashing cooling her like tears.

The night would labour on with laggard motion till the day was born, and Phyllis watched for its grey coming with eager eyes, then slept content, because it reunited her with this, her love.

People wondered at the sad-faced girl who sat so silent at the sea's feet.

Fashionable women, in nautical garb, smiled at her simple dress and her far-away look.

She might be made to appear quite pretty if only she were properly gowned, they said, noting

with quick glance the delicate pallor of her face, and the soft, fair tangle of her hair.

But Phyllis's eyes were filled with the worship of the waters, as her tangled curls were salt with their breath. She had no thought to turn these glances upon her, she only asked to be left to herself and the magnetic charm of her great friend.

They decided, after a while, that this girl, who looked so faithfully seaward, 'must be in love with some sailor, you know,' and withdrew their attention to a more responsive quarter.

But a month, though there be only eight hundred and forty such in our allotted life, soon passes, and Phyllis was compelled to tear herself from 'the far-sounding.'

Those four weeks of passionate sea-absorption had steeped her soul, and it did not please her to leave its vast murmurous peace for the bustle of London, to exchange its storm-stirred breath, that tingled against her cheek with the freshness of some thousand miles' primeval purity, for an atmosphere into which squalor and vice and disease pour their rank volumes of waste and bacteria.

'Oh, my beloved friend,' she cried, standing upon the moonlit beach the night before she left, 'I must leave you for long, and how can I live without you?'

The sea was in one of her softest moods, and murmured against the pier with a gentle sadden-

ing plaint, as if she were sobbing to lose her young companion.

She trembled sympathetically in the moonlight, and, with the quiet seductiveness of her smooth beauty, wooed her worshipper's stay.

She washed the shore with broken kisses, and cast soft sprays of tears up to the girl's cheeks. With magnetic breath she lifted her hair, tossing it to and fro with playful fingers. She wound shy, breezy arms about her, holding her throat and waist with tender touch.

And all the while she smiled appealingly, and with a rhythmic dimpling of her moonlit face, as if she answered, in sweet, sad echo, 'Oh, my beloved.'

Phyllis lingered long that night—that last, last night—and with reluctant feet and a great soul-ache wandered to and fro.

She remembered nothing, thought of nothing, only that, when the day came, she must part from this friend, who had smiled and kissed such mysterious sweet wounds into her heart.

How should she bear their pain, when the briny touch no longer soothed it?

Would not their tremulous tender lips open and cry at her breast for the soft, salt, balmy breath?

Oh, this sea-madness! Only those who have felt it know fully the grip of its thrilling, soft-tipped hands.



Through the long night, she lay weary and unhappy, straining her ears for the sound of the ocean-voice, which, when she heard it, only moved her to passionate tears, as she thought of the coming nights when she would listen for it vainly.

She sickened with a lonely terror at the fancy of the noisy streets, and shouts of men, and rattle of cabs, and all she was exchanging for that vast, soothing sea-sobbing.

She rose early and went down shoreward to say good-bye to it. But its mood was changed.

It was no longer a tender, smiling beauty bidding her linger. A wind had sprung up at dawn, and a misty rain was falling.

The sea was grey and leaden, and a frothing foam about its lips, as it licked the shore with angry tongue, showed the swell of its rage.

No longer it put soft tender arms about her, or flung her kisses, but, with a treacherous denial of all its love and promises, it beat and pushed her with boisterous violence, and dashed defiant, foam-flecked hands into her face.

It sent long shining reaches of water up the strand, wetting her to the knees with its sudden gliding stealth, and making her slip, in the seething swirl of its strength, as it fell back, balked.

For Phyllis's ocean-friend would willingly have drawn her to herself, broken her life on a whirling

wheel of waters, then smilingly cast her up the shore as so much froth.

But the girl loved it in its rage as in its calm ; she felt a kind of passionate pride in its mighty implacability and power, and that morning she pleased herself by believing that her sea was angry that she left it.

As the train passed out of the station she strained her eyes for a last long glimpse, then fell back, aching at heart, when its sullen, foam-flecked face no longer showed.

‘You are not right yet, Phyl,’ Dr. Janet said, as her *protégée* removed her hat and sat turning it about in her restless fingers. ‘I don’t like the look of you. You are certainly no better than when you left.’

‘Perhaps I missed my Aunt Janet,’ Phyllis answered playfully.

Then her heart smote her, for she remembered, as the other looked at her with anxious affection, how little, in her wild, strange month of sea-love, she had thought of this kind woman.

‘Oh, Aunt Janet,’ she cried suddenly, kissing the broad, white, helpful hand laid kindly on her shoulder, ‘take me to your heart and forgive me. I am a bad, ungrateful girl.’

‘Bless the child!’ the other answered ; ‘what can have come to her, to change her so?’

## CHAPTER XXI.

Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity.

PHYLLIS returned to her work.

She had now reached that stage of a medical curriculum, when some knowledge of the body in health had prepared her for the study of its morbidities.

Her chief occupation was therefore in the hospital, where she studied disease at the bedside, and, with her finger on its pulse, learnt some strange truths about humanity.

She saw the wretched mother, with the child at her withered breast, while yet another life dragged at the shreds of her tattered strength, clutching for the ragged semblance of a human clothing.

She saw the sins and ignorances of the parents visited upon the children unto many generations; she saw the babe of poverty and vice, with its wizened face and old eyes, which seemed so lost in considering the perpetual aching of its bones, and

all the multiple miseries of existence, that it forgot to cry about them.

She saw the idiot, with great misshapen head and a rhythmic movement of limb, which were its only consciousness of life, and wondered, with a shudder, if really a human soul could be imprisoned in so terrible a void.

She saw the luxuriant beauty of tuberculous children—the beauty that is like a lovely weed—noting the dainty satin texture of their skins, the gold in their hair and bronze in their lashes, the ivory in the stainless whiteness of their limbs, the angel-lights that lie within, the bistre-shadows that lie beneath, the deep eyes. Nature in them runs apace in a prodigality of charm, but is unable to maintain the extravagant level of her outset.

The beautiful limbs, set to walk at our nineteenth century pace, grow carious; the lenses of the lovely eyes will not focus themselves to our practical print; the turmoil of our unquiet lives harasses the hyper-sensitive nervous systems and inflames the delicate brain-meninges.

There is an atmosphere of silence about these beautiful infants—a breathless moment, as it were, during which the Mother's last perfect touches are put in—then the delicate balance is all at once lost, the powers too weighted, disease with pain and distortion enters in and seizes on the perfect limbs.

In her moment of triumph—with a rustle of her wings—nature stirs the air ungently, and the too delicate structure is shattered.

Then a terrible wreckage is there! The wax-like flesh melts away in suppuration, the frail bones necrose; the stainless skin is seamed with scars; the lustrous eyes are wide and mournful with the memory of suffering. But rarely, or never, do these exotics of civilisation fulfil the promise of their childhood.

Yet not wholly depressing and sad were her experiences.

Evidences of human devotion and self-sacrifice, of unwearying patience, and persistent pluck, brightened the picture.

Light touches of humour, too, sometimes relieved the scene.

‘I cut it with a knife last night,’ explained the unlucky owner of a wounded hand. ‘My man done it up, but this morning it were a mass of “corrugated” blood!’

After being stitched and dressed, the injured member was put into a sling, and a laugh went round when the woman’s small son, who had interested himself greatly in these surgical details, demanded, with one masculine eye on the maternal misfortune, and the other on the main chance, ‘Now, *who’ll cut the bread-and-butter?*’

That is, of course, one of the general uses which mother subserves, and in this particular instance, the utilitarian disadvantage of the disabled hand, the manner in which it immediately affected himself, was the standpoint whence the dutiful son regarded the maternal accident.

Another case presenting itself was that of a small girl, introduced by a sister still smaller, the post of master of the ceremonies being, in this class of life, regarded as essential to the seriousness of the situation, and relegated, with becoming suitability, to the soundest member of the family.

This enviable distinction happened now to fall upon one considerably the junior of the patient.

‘It’s her little chest, lady doctor,’ the child explained of her elder’s condition; ‘there’s phlegm on the chest o’ nights, and the cough flies to her head!’

The *débutante*, whose credentials were thus asserted, assumed the look of self-commiseration and importance due to these remarkable eccentricities of her ‘little chest,’ and waited for her further symptoms to be described.

Among the typical class of hospital frequenters it is contrary to all etiquette for the patient to state his own case.

If anyway practicable, he brings a friend to describe his ailments, while he himself remains

dumb, only intimating, by nods and signs, the accuracy or otherwise of the description.

‘That’s just him,’ says he of himself, when some strikingly accurate hit-off of his sensations is made, ‘that’s me to a *T*!’

Before coming, of course, the thing has been carefully rehearsed. The friend has been coached in all the particulars, has laboured again and again through the deposition, assisted and corrected by the sufferer, who assumes an injured, if not an offensive air, should his symptoms lose a hair-breadth of their severity in the telling.

To us it seems simpler for the patient to tell his own story, but such an intimation meets with a pained surprise, warning us that a breach of decorum has been committed.

‘Can you not speak for yourself?’ was asked that morning of the maiden whose lungs appeared to be assuming functions not physiologically required of them.

‘Sal knows best,’ she replied, under her breath. ‘Mother told her all about it.’

‘How can anyone know as well as yourself what you feel?’

‘She knows how I looks at times. I looks worse than ever I feels, and mother says it’s the looks as tells!’

The recreant chest is examined, and discloses

phthisical symptoms, which will soon, poor child, make her feel as bad as she looks ; then, prescribed for, she passes on, to make room for some other.

The other is a little old woman of eight, who, with a big-headed baby in her arms, and a large, empty bottle in her hands, presents a greased and dirt-laden paper, which, unfolded, proves to be a hospital prescription-slip.

‘ Please, ma’am, I want some more of my physick,’ she observes, bobbing down, apparently under the weight of the flabby infant, but, perhaps, with a notion of a civil obeisance.

‘ Bless the mite,’ cries Dr. Janet, consulting the slip, and eyeing the bottle, ‘ you don’t mean to say you have drunk a pint of medicine in two days. I ordered you enough for a week.’

‘ ‘Twasn’t me, ma’am,’ she replies glibly, giving a hitch to the heavy infant, which finds no rest for its flaccid limbs on the thin arms and sharp elbows of its sister. ‘ ‘Twasn’t me as had it. You’ve got to go and blame father ; he felt awful bad, and so he drunk it all o’ Sunday !’

Here the baby gives a dismal howl, as it is jerked still higher, and lights against an angular shoulder, whereupon its severe young mentor effectually silences it by shaking all remaining breath out of its body, as punishment for its presumption in crying before its betters.



Some soft-hearted student pops a chocolate into its mouth, with the result that the girl, snatching up the paper on which 'repeat' has been written, decamps unceremoniously, cutting short Dr. Janet's admonitions concerning the unsuitability of any particular mixture for general family purposes.

The reason of her haste proclaims itself speedily, in a wail from her unfortunate charge, which makes it apparent that this small creature is learning, probably not for the first time, to go shares with its fellows, more especially when these happen to be older and stronger.

'Little brute!' someone comments, and the next case comes forward.

It is not a little pathetic to note the fine patience of some child-sufferers.

Starvation and blows are hard tutors, but they teach endurance, and the quietness with which some children, with scarcely a tremor, submit to the inevitable, even though this be a knife, is as touching as it is terrible.

Only a rigour of harshness, whence there is no appeal, the hopelessness of a cowed life, can lead, so young, to the crushing of self that it asks no respite, cries for no delay, but accepts its fate without question.

Apathy like this is a degeneration of fortitude,

and callousness and brutality are such apathy's children.

'Now, ladies,' Dr. Janet would remark, as a poor woman with her offspring stood in review, 'you hear a good deal about man's spiritual nature, but if you will observe the heads and general development of these children, you will notice a marked deterioration, from eldest to youngest. The first was born under tolerable conditions, was suitably fed and tended, and is, on the whole, a very fair specimen. In the second there is a distinct degeneration—what will feed three, stints four—the head is weak and badly formed, the body ill-developed. The third child is as typical an example of rickets as you are likely to see. Now, in these the brain development gradually and distinctly degenerates. Why? You will call me a materialist when I tell you it is almost entirely a question of feeding. Nature insists upon the development of the animal faculties—those essential to mere existence—she cares but little about the higher faculties; these belong to another department. Now, as the supply falls short she abstracts the greater portion of available nutritive material for the growth of mere animal qualities. The others slowly starve. The child grows up more or less of a criminal, because he gets only enough food to feed his rudimentary faculties, and cannot afford the luxury

of those more highly organised. We shall imprison or hang him in his maturity—it would have been better to feed him in his youth.’

It was her pet theme, and she oftentimes astonished the parents of sickly or evilly-disposed children by asking them fiercely, were they not ashamed to have brought such ‘human rubbish’ into existence, or so to have bred them that their health and better feelings wasted.

The women would whimper feeble platitudes about Providence, but Dr. Janet permitted no such scapegoat for human responsibilities.

‘Providence! Fiddlesticks!’ she would say impiously. ‘It’s early marriages, self-neglect, and drink; it’s starch and water, instead of good milk, bits of potato, apple-rinds and sips of beer that have done the mischief. Feed babies properly and they will generally be good-tempered. Feed children properly and they will, in most cases, be fair-natured. Feed men properly and they will rarely be criminals. You can’t grow fine flowers on badly-nourished soil; you can’t grow fine men on flimsy food.’

Then, having worked herself into a gloomy rage at sight of the degenerate mankind in miniature about her, she would inaugurate dinners for the children, demanding imperiously, from friends and patients, assistance towards the funds she largely supplied.

And she would watch with her fine smile the ravenous little creatures eat, as if she saw their fibre quicken under the influence of her good soup, their senses strengthen with the stimulus of substantial pudding.

It hurt her big heart to see little human children clad in brown paper, and shoeless—she would cheerfully have sacrificed all her possessions, could she by doing so have effectually comforted their interiors and be-flannelled their exteriors !

‘No one,’ she would grumble, ‘is permitted to deface the coinage of our realm, yet everyone has free licence to degrade our human currency. The privilege of creating a type of man which shall mark itself into the ages should be permitted only to those who are worthy of it, morally and physically. We protect the patents which limit the printing of paper pictures, yet we permit the limitless production of base human counterfeits. A fig for our boasted enlightenment !’

## CHAPTER XXII.

Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?

‘WHEN are you going to marry, Cousin Paul?’ Dr. Janet inquired one evening as they sat together. ‘You are getting to be a regular old bachelor, and of late you have worn a face as long as a fiddle and as black as a thunderstorm.’

‘I will exchange it willingly for that of the first smiling duffer you select,’ he answered moodily, looking into the fire with a gloomy frown.

‘There you are—at it again. You would make a capital study for a sketch of Lucifer as you sit glaring at my coals as if they would not burn some lost soul fast enough!’

He laughed, not very pleasantly.

‘There’s a nice way for a Christian to laugh—a cross between a growl and a sneer. What *is* the matter with the boy?’

‘It seems to me some of the fault must be in

yourself when you slate me if I scowl or if I laugh. I can't be in fault always.'

'Well, what is it? What has gone wrong with you?'

'Liver,' he said laconically.

'Very likely,' she agreed; 'but that is only secondary. What is the primary origin of this chronic hepatic disturbance that is spoiling your looks and temper?'

'You want me to say I am in love.'

'It would be a very satisfactory explanation of your symptoms.'

'Isn't a man capable of being out of sorts without your sex having a finger in it?'

'Well! I hope it's that. It is time you settled down. I tell you you're growing into a grumpy old bachelor.'

'The charming candour of cousinship!'

'Who is she? And why do you look so glum about her? You are a very likely sort of man, Paul.'

'Well, Janet, who shall it be out of all our fair circle? Shall it be Miss Stanton?'

'It is *not* Miss Stanton,' she replied, looking keenly at him, 'though you might do worse.'

'That isn't a very good reason for not doing better.'

'She is handsome and intelligent.'

‘Heaven save one from that most unlovable of creatures—an intelligent woman.’

‘Goodness! You don’t admire a fool?’

‘No. But intelligence, the keen-eyed, level-headed, cool-blooded—’

‘What an eccentricity you are. You wouldn’t have your children’s mother an idiot.’

‘Nor would I have intelligence my children’s chief characteristic. Ugh! I think I see them—the large-headed, spectacled, cold-eyed offspring of your “intelligent woman!” I must make up the fire, Janet, the notion freezes me.’

‘Well, then, I suppose I must exclude all those who have brains. How would Miss Cliffard do? She is dense enough in all conscience.’

‘Dense indeed! But cannot your quick eye find me a happy medium, a delightful mean between a blue-stockings and a dunce.’

‘It isn’t easy.’ Then she mounted her hobby-horse and set off at a canter. ‘Either we lie fallow altogether, or we wring out all our human nature by high pressure. We force all our energies on to an intellectual plane; we devote nothing to the emotional, consequently the emotional in us is mainly dregs. We permit no lounging, mental or bodily, to our growing children; we are for ever rubbing them up, and polishing and battering them, with the result that but few are fine reservoirs in

which human forces are intelligently conserved and evolved ; most of them are mere sieves, filled with little cracks, whence their capacity spouts and wastes !’

‘Bravo, doctor ! You become graphic !’

‘Each one of us pipes his little whistle and no one listens. Discord and confusion ensue. Instead of listening a little, and reflecting, we are all blowing hard at our own especial little twopenny trumpets. Paul, I conjure you, never educate your children. The present notions of education are worse than worthless. They destroy all naturalness and spontaneity. We are becoming a race of clever, shallow automata ; we are relapsing to a monkey-like agility of brain and body, and are losing the serious quietness of man. Teach your sons and daughters to be good loving men and women, Paul—not physical and mental acrobats. Teach them to *appreciate*—it is the richest of all knowledges—far greater than that of paltry imitation. It is only the monkey in us that makes mimicry the keynote of our lives and training. After all, the power of expression comes easiest to those who have least to express.’

‘People have got to live, Janet, and your good loving men and women would have to spend their conservative, appreciative lives in the workhouse, because, you see, these are not negotiable quantities.’



‘ Things are all wrong, and will change gradually. It can’t of course come all at once. We must be brought up on commercial lines to a certain extent, but at least we needn’t learn more tricks than are necessary to live by ; we needn’t batter more holes in the sieve than we can help. You remember Renan attributes his fine mental creativeness to the fact that his ancestors were simple peasants. What he calls the “reservoir of undifferentiated faculty”—which is the store-house of an evolving generation—had not been frittered away in worthless little clever agilities and petty arts.’

‘ But what about my wives, Janet? While, Blue-beard like, we are holding the poor things up by the head for trespassing into forbidden pastures, I remain a disagreeable, grumpy, old bachelor.’

‘ Well, do ! ’ she rejoined sharply, ‘ for, bless my soul, if I can find you a desirable partner. One is too smart, another too dull ; one is too pretty, another too plain ; one too ignorant, another too blue ; and nearly all have only rudimentary hearts ! ’

‘ Well, I shall always have you to fall back upon, cousin,’ he said, with a sudden lightening of his humour. ‘ You have more heart than you know what to do with, and I know you have always been secretly fond of me. Now, Janet, let us defer the happy union no longer. Here am I, a good-looking, rising young doctor—a very likely sort of man, as

you say—and willing. Won't you come and comfort my loneliness, run my house, coax and pet and play the fond wife to me, and add your large income to my small one? We should get along capitally.'

'I am much obliged, young sir, for having made me what you doubtless believe to be my first offer. But let me tell you you are mistaken. More than one before you has requested permission to call himself Mr. Janet, and share my house and horses. Even now, for all my fifty years, I might buy the ring, and take not at all a bad-looking young man to church to-morrow were I so inclined. Your sex knows fairly well on which side its bread is buttered. But you're not to my taste, Paul Liveing. Your temper is short, and mine is apt to be scrappy, and we should quarrel irrevocably before the honeymoon was out!'

'Rejected, by the gods!' he exclaimed, clasping his hands tragically.

'Now, do be sensible, and listen to reason.'

'Hear her!' he cried; 'listen to reason, when her reason deals such death-blows. Oh, cousin, cousin, that I should live to be refused by you who have loved me so long.'

'Paul, if you say another word, I will have you put out,' she expostulated irritably. 'I want to know all about it, and you put me off with this rubbish. Now I will guess. First, do I know her?'

‘Ah! you know her but too well, the false one!’

‘Paul, do you mean to talk sense?’

‘As well as my love-sick feelings will allow me.’

‘I repeat, do I know her?’

‘You do,’ reluctantly.

‘Is she fair—light-haired, I mean?’

‘Her skin is alabaster, her locks are gold.’

‘Now, no nonsense! Does she know of this? Does she return your affection?’

‘Who can say?’

‘Well, if not, it is probably only a matter of time. Is she—why do you not tell me who she is and all about it?’

‘The truth is,’ he said, shooting a sly glance at her—‘the fact is, she hasn’t enough of money. As you know, I have luxurious tastes, and I am afraid she could not satisfy them.’

‘You don’t mean it? You can’t be so poor-spirited?’

‘Oh, it’s all very well for you to talk, with your high-flown, romantic notions, but we men are different, you see. We’ve got to look after ourselves in these difficult days. One can’t live on love.’

‘Paul, I am disappointed in you. I know you for a good man. I know you have not wasted honest heart and feeling in contemptible dissipations. *You* certainly should have something of manly devotion and single-mindedness to give a girl.’

‘I am no saint,’ he said shortly, with a masculine dread of seeming singular.

‘Perhaps not; but you are a good man for all your cynicism. And I had hoped—Paul, I had hoped to have your children to love in my old age.’

The break in her strong voice moved him; the moisture in her kind eyes melted him. He became serious in a moment.

‘Look here, cousin,’ he said, ‘one *must* try for something, and—and thank you for thinking like that. But what has been called “the murky atmosphere of an average man’s life,” begrimes one long after he’s taken to breathing something cleaner, and it’s apt to come back on him when he least wants it, and it doesn’t improve his opinion of himself.’ They sat in silence for a while, then he said: ‘You shall know something, Janet. The truth is, I do care for a girl—a lovely, sweet girl. Heavens! how it stirs a man!’ He leaned his head on his hands, and his fingers worked restlessly. ‘But it’s no good,’ he said, and his listener’s sympathetic ear caught more than his words. ‘She doesn’t care *that* for me.’

‘That’ was a vicious snap of the fingers, which did not altogether express the nature of Phyllis’s feeling.

‘Who is she?’

‘What is the good? I am nothing to her, and never shall be.’

‘Who is she?’

‘Well, if you must have it—it’s your Phyllis!’

Dr. Janet’s well-strung nerves did not often betray her into such a start as this revelation now occasioned her.

‘Phyllis!’ she echoed. ‘My little girl Phyl!’

‘She’s not such a girl but a man may care for her,’ he said grimly.

‘Oh, Paul. She is the last person in the world I could have wished.’

‘And why?’ he asked, looking at her with burning eyes. ‘You won’t find many more likely for a man to love.’

‘But it is impossible. She is not free. The whole thing is a madness. There is nothing left but to tell you her story. She—’

He stood up.

‘I will listen to nothing,’ he said strongly, ‘and it’s no good. I shall never be anything to her. Her story—nothing that has happened could keep me from caring about her; but I am a weak fool, and I would rather not hear it—anyhow not to-night. From what you said before, I know there is something, but, whatever it is, it couldn’t make any difference. After all, we men are mean hypocrites when we demand that women’s

lives shall be immaculate, while our own—' He stopped short, then he resumed more quietly: 'Janet—no I will not hear you,' this as she would have spoken. 'One always dreams of loving a girl, whose heart and life are spotless—it's easy to bluster like a fool. I have no right to ask for what I can't give in return. If she has—has slipped—Janet, she's such a girl and—and simple.' He paused, labouring with his breath, then almost a sob burst from him. 'My God, how a man might shield her and keep her—if she would let him!'

Dr. Janet could not speak. She was herself too deeply moved at sight of the uncontrollable feeling he was grappling with.

She held out her hand. He touched it impetuously, and hurried out.

As he went down the stairs, going slowly and striving with himself, he found the library door half opened, and saw, in the soft light of her student-lamp, a shadow thrown upon the wall.

He stood and looked at it, not daring, in his present mood, to risk her seeing and calling to him. He had not met her to speak with since the night of the dance.

Her delicate features, and the wavy, fluffy outline of her head, were magnified in the lamp-light.

The shadow lifted its hands presently, and laid

them over the delicate face, till they were lost in the curves of head and coiled hair, and Dr. Liveing caught the sound of a sigh.

He saw soon the heaving rise and fall of a shadowy breast, heard the unmistakable swell of a sob, and then the misty girl-head fell suddenly forward upon wraith-like arms, and laid itself into their clasp.

There was no doubt she was crying. He could see it in her attitude and the rhythmic heave of the shadowy bosom ; he could hear it in the shuddering of her breath.

Could he leave her so ? Would he not say a word to help comfort her ?

Doubtless it was some problem in her study that was distressing her, some pharmaceutical or therapeutic difficulty.

He would be a brute, indeed, if to spare himself he made no attempt to lighten her trouble.

He went in quietly and stood beside her. Her books and papers were scattered heedlessly around. Before her was an open volume of *Quain's Medicine*, on which her arms rested, and into which she was crying out her heart. The lamp stood dangerously near, making a fuzzy halo of her bright hair. He moved it aside, then laid a hand on her shoulder.

‘What is it, my pupil ?’ he asked kindly.

She sprang up with a cry, pushing the rough,

disordered curls from brow and cheeks. One look she gave him from her tear-stained eyes, one glance of recognition.

Then she bent forward: ' Dr. Liveing, Dr. Paul !' she cried.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

She rose—she sprung—she clung to his embrace  
Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face.

PAUL LIVEING knew his name very well. He had heard it often enough, but he had never heard it as it was called that evening in the girl's glad cry.

There was no mistaking its meaning, as there could be no mistaking the joyous flash of her eyes and the flush of her cheek. All his doubts and fears vanished as mist before their tell-tale truth. His brain beat heavily, his knees shook.

This was only for a moment. Then he took the pliant, yielding figure into his arms, and held the golden-haloed head against his breast.

She thrilled and fluttered at his heart like a frightened bird. He kissed her again and again : ' I love you, I love you ! ' he said, and still said it.

Phyllis answered nothing, but she clung to him, tender and timid, and the mysterious throbbing sea-wounds closed their lips and lay in peace.

Then the exultant leap of soul to soul was all at once checked.

The recollection of her bondage stabbed her, and with a little sob she strove to unclasp herself from arm and lip.

‘What shall I do?’ she whispered, shuddering. ‘Did Aunt Janet tell you? Do you know about me?’

‘Not now, not now,’ he protested passionately. ‘Phyllis, let me be happy. Kiss me once, twice, and say you love me.’

‘But I am not free. Oh, I may not love you. Oh, why didn’t she tell you—not leave it to me?’

‘Phyl, my dear, my sweetheart. You shall never tell me if you do not like. I love you as you are, as you will be, ay, and as you were, whatever it was.’

She was sobbing violently as he drew her to him again. She laid a trembling, timid kiss on his hand.

‘But, Paul, you *must* know. It can’t be. I—oh, how can I tell him?’

‘You shall not. I will not hear,’ he persisted. ‘I know nothing but that I love you—I want to know nothing but that you love me.’

‘Ah, my dear, my dear,’ she said, ‘but I am married.’

‘A widow?’ he gasped.

‘No! he is living.’

There are silences more terrible than terrible words, there is pallor more awful than death's! She was terror-stricken at the change in him, at his dark, rigid lips, his eyes, and the stagger of the frame against which she leant. She put soft, tender arms about him, and cried to him, and kissed his face and the rough coat covering his breast.

She laid her loving hands upon his brow, and whispered courage, and smiled and fondled and soothed him as if he had been her little child.

All the full tenderness of a woman's heart was born in her at the touch of his grief.

'Ah, my dear, my dear,' she said, and with her loving weight and the clasp of her arms she dragged him to a chair that stood near, then flung herself face down upon his clenched hand, and hid her eyes from his terrible look.

'It's all over, Phyl,' he whispered soon, speaking through the curls of her prone head. 'It was bad, but things are not worse than I thought them an hour ago. I thought you didn't, and never would care for me. But you do, you do, don't you, Phyl?'

'Oh, Paul!'

'Yes, I know, I know, my love, but it never can be.'

'But we can go on loving one another. Nothing can take that away. He will never come—and I

would kill myself first. He will never find me now. And you and I can love one another all our lives.'

He made no answer. He was seeing difficulties she had not thought of.

'Phyl,' he asked presently, 'how did it happen? Why did you marry him if you dislike him? How did you leave him?'

'I was so young, and did not know.'

'Why did you leave him?'

'Oh, Paul, he kissed me!'

'What?'

'He kissed me that morning we were married. And then—oh, how I hated him, and I ran away. But if he should ever come, if he finds me, ah, my dear, you will never let him take me away?'

He held her away from him, looking at her with hot, jealous eyes.

'Phyllis, how long did you stay with him?'

'I did not stay, Paul. I left him that morning as soon as the ceremony was over.'

He caught her back to him and kissed her passionately.

'My white dove!' he cried.

'Paul! Phyllis!'

Dr. Janet stood in the doorway, watching their enraptured clasp.

Phyllis, with a timid exclamation, lifted her head from his breast. He quietly loosed her.

‘It’s a bad business, I know, Janet,’ he said, with a gloomy look.

‘Phyllis, go to your room,’ Dr. Doyle commanded. He caught her hand.

‘I’m not going to have her scolded,’ he said. ‘I know everything. As I said, it’s a bad business, but it’s no use blaming anyone.’

‘Oh, Aunt Janet,’ Phyllis pleaded, ‘how could I help caring for him? And, indeed, I did not know before. It all came suddenly to-night.’

‘Phyl, I want you to leave us.’

She went obediently, her eyes clinging all the while to his.

‘Good gracious, Paul, do you know she is married?’ his cousin said, closing the door.

He nodded assent.

‘Paul, you are a gentleman—’

‘You need not go on,’ he interposed; ‘I love the girl.’

‘Ah, you men,’ she said bitterly; ‘when do you not love yourselves better?’

‘Not often, I confess, but— We need not continue the discussion from that point of view.’ Then after a pause: ‘What do you know of him?’

‘Nothing further than that he is the Marquis de Richeville, a wealthy, influential man. She was

married to him at seventeen and left him the same day. Her mother was here in town and told me all about it. She has been with me since. He, I understand, has used every means to find her, but has failed. Doubtless he has consoled himself long ago.'

'Did you say De Richeville of Richeville and Bellairs?'

'Yes. Do you know him?'

'He shot my friend, Poynter—you remember the affair. Strange that the beast should come twice into my life?'

Janet told him the story of Phyllis's flight that night, when she had been bidden to return to her husband. She told him how she had found her, with hunted eyes, fixed fascinated on the river.

How grimly his jaw set.

'Good Heavens!' he said, 'can a girl feel like that?'

'Is it surprising that her whiteness should shrink from him? If more women had instincts as true, a good many ways would have to be mended.'

'Perhaps it is as well they haven't—until the ways *are* mended. But what are we to do about this? How is it all going to be managed?'

'There is nothing to be done. You are in love with a woman who is the wife of another. The best thing for both of you, so far as I can see, is that you go to the antipodes.'

‘And leave her to him?’

‘She belongs to him. The law looks upon her as his goods and chattel—regards her love as his purchased right.’

‘I can’t stand this, Janet,’ he said, wiping a heavy moisture from his brow. ‘Don’t talk of the brute.’

‘Paul,’ she continued, looking at him with her keen eyes, ‘you will have to emigrate, unless you will promise not to see her again.’

‘It is too much to ask.’

He got up and walked about quickly.

‘Are you thinking of *her*?’

‘No. I am thinking of myself.’

‘Just let yourself slide for a moment—if you can.’

He paced the room rapidly several times, then he went and sat down opposite to her.

‘Now then,’ he said deliberately.

‘Think of her as a simple, affectionate girl.’

‘Yes.’

‘A girl who knows nothing of the world.’

He nodded.

‘A girl capable of the utmost devotion and self-forgetfulness.’

He buried his face in his hands.

‘Whose imagination and hero-worship make the man she loves a god, and put her affection on such a pinnacle that all else is dwarfed. Are you

ache. And for this it is best she should not be reminded of you.'

He did not look pleased. The notion of being forgotten does not recommend itself to any of us, even when we know it to be the only way out of a difficulty.

'And if De Richeville comes?' he suggested.

'Leave him to her. She will dispose of him, though he may be troublesome.'

'In that case I will dispose of him. D--n him!' he said.



strong enough for such a trust, Paul? Are you armour-proof against such odds? Ah, I know women. I know the shallow-hearted ones, whose depths are sounded by convention. I know the large-souled, devoted ones, though they are rare enough, goodness knows, whom nature leadeth, and in whose tender sight love can do no wrong.'

She saw the sudden, silent grip of his hands as they grappled with himself.

'Paul, in her perfect purity lies her greatest danger.'

'You are right,' he cried hoarsely. 'I will do as you say. I will not see her again.' After an interval he resumed peevishly: 'It's well enough to lay down rules, and moralise, and all that, but I can tell you, Janet, it won't be so easy to carry it out. Goodness knows, there's little enough in life. We need not throw away a chance of something better when it turns up. After all, one might as well see her occasionally.'

'One might as well do nothing of the kind,' she insisted quietly. 'The girl's only chance of happiness—I consider it from her standpoint, because these things are more to women than to men, and because, Paul, because her standpoint, I think, will be yours—her only chance is to return to her work, bury her head in her books, and forget her heart-

## CHAPTER XXIV

—for sometimes  
The devil is a gentleman !

‘YOU see, we could not help it, aunt,’ Phyllis explained. ‘It came so quickly, one hadn’t time to think about it. He used to explain chemistry difficulties for me. And he is so splendid, you know, and then, last night it suddenly came about.’

‘Like a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen when an electric spark is sent into it, I suppose?’ Dr. Janet said grimly.

Phyllis laughed happily. She was radiant. Her grey eyes were luminous and soft, her mouth was smiling, she had a new brightness of cheek, and, withal, a shy blush upon it, and her hair curled with a tenderer droop about her brow and ears. She stood twisting a ribbon in her hands.

All the shadows of the sunlight that seemed to have centred in her, showed in the elder woman, who, after a sleepless night, now sat silent and dark regarding her.

‘Phyllis,’ she said, ‘what are you thinking about? Are you blind, child, that you are so happy? Do you forget you are the wife of another?’

Phyllis shrank as if struck.

‘Oh, let me forget it! Why need I always be reminded of it? He will never find me, and if he does, there is Paul now’

‘Are you mad? What can Paul do? No one has any right over you but your husband.’

‘*He* shall have no right,’ she answered quietly.

She was pale now, and she no longer smiled.

‘Ah, Phyllis, Phyllis,’ Dr. Janet said, with her eyes on the young face, ‘it is indeed a bad business.’

‘Aunt Janet,’ the girl said after a pause, ‘I am not a child, and I am not mad. I know Paul can never, of course, be anything more to me than someone I love dearly, dearly. Someone, one can’t say it, but it is all here,’ she touched her breast lightly; ‘and it makes things different, as the sunshine does, don’t you know? And even were one to grow blind, one could never forget the sunlight. And I can never, were I to try ever so hard, I could never forget Paul.’

‘You must try to do so, Phyl. My girl, there are other things in life but Paul. There are duties and obligations, and by your own act—I am not blaming you, Phyl—but by your own act you have cut yourself off from love. You are married to one

man, and you may not let another man make love to you. It would be dishonourable, disastrous—nothing but harm could come of it. You must crush it down. You must live in your work. You must not see him again.'

'Not see him again! What *do* you mean? And what do you think he would say?'

'There is only one thing to say. I have said it, and he has said it!'

'He has said we are not to see one another again? Oh, Aunt Janet, has he forgotten last night?'

'He is not likely to forget last night, nor are you, I am afraid, Phyllis. But the sooner you can the better.'

'I can never forget it, and I do not wish to,' she rejoined sadly.

How some voices and faces change in the space of a minute!

'I cannot understand you thinking as you do. We love one another, and there can be no wrong in our meeting. Love cannot be dishonourable! My marriage was that, more than that, and I detest myself for it. But my love, no, not my love.'

Dr. Janet, in vain, set things before her from their conventional standpoint.

She maintained persistently that her wrongdoing lay in her marriage, not in her affection for Living.

But wheresoever her error lay, it presently brought forth bitter fruit.

One evening, as she left the hospital, a man, who stood in the shade of its large entrance, came forward, and as the lamplight fell on her he spoke.

‘So I have found you at last.’

It was De Richeville. He looked older and harassed. The sense of well-being and complacency, which had kept the lines out of his face, and given him an air of good-humour, had now left it, and he showed a savage tension about the mouth, mean, worldly wrinkles round the eyes.

Phyllis stopped short in the gateway at sight of him, a sudden fit of trembling rendering her powerless. She looked up at him with a wild, fixed gaze.

He looked down at her with a disagreeable sneer.

‘Please, do not make a scene,’ he said coldly ; ‘take me where we can talk quietly.’

‘It is no good,’ she cried, shuddering. ‘Oh, it will be no good at all !’

‘We shall see,’ he rejoined, and he waited for her.

As chance had it, at that moment the hospital gate opened and Dr. Liveing came out. With a little appealing cry, Phyllis caught at his sleeve as he was passing in the dusk.

‘Paul !’

‘Why, Phyllis, Miss Phyllis, what is it ?’ he in-

quired, surprised at the horror in her eyes and the tremble of her hand upon his.

Then he looked in the direction of her frightened glance. He drew her hand under the friendly pressure of his arm, for he knew now what had happened.

Then the two men faced one another.

‘So you are the cause,’ the Marquis said, with cool insolence.

Phyllis felt a sudden, fierce impulse in the arm she held. But Liveing only answered quietly,—

‘I think, sir, we had better defer any conversation for a more convenient time and place. This lady is under my cousin—Dr. Janet Doyle’s—care. You can see her at—Harley Street.’

‘The lady is my wife, sir,’ the other answered fiercely. ‘Loose her arm.’

‘She is weak and faint, she is not in a fit condition to stand alone. With your permission I will put her into the carriage. You can see her at the address I have given, any time you wish.’

He conducted her to his carriage which was waiting, and the coachman drove off.

‘You shall answer to me for this, sir,’ De Richeville said, facing him in a white heat.

‘There is nothing to answer for,’ Paul replied coolly. ‘The lady has been living with my cousin

for the last three years. I could not very well leave her to faint in the streets.'

He passed his card to the Marquis, who took it with a curt nod. Then he turned on his heel and walked away.

Was any man ever in a more horrible dilemma, he reflected savagely, as he strode along. Here was the woman he loved claimed by the man who legally, and to all intents and purposes, had the only right over her, and she loved *him*, and appealed to him for protection. Any betrayal of his interest in her could only serve to cast suspicion on her, yet every fibre in him was passionately fired to insist, by virtue of his manhood and his love, upon defending her.

Defending her? Against her own husband. Was there ever such a complication? Good Heavens! what greater right could there be than that of their mutual love? Should she, loving him, be forced into the arms of another, while he stood by, inert? Was there any law in heaven or earth that sanctioned a thing so monstrous?

Yet what could he do? Stand by her and defy her husband? What then would her husband and the world say? Such action would but cast mud on her white innocence.

He hurled a thousand imprecations upon an artificial system which, till that hour, he had accepted

as being sufficiently rational. He longed for ten turbulent minutes with the Marquis, during which they both might cast away the instincts of nineteen hundred years of civilisation, and prove with foot to foot, and hand to hand, which was the better man.

But of what use would it be? Whatsoever he might do would but result in the pointing of scorn's finger at her.

To catch her to him, and whirl her away to primeval realms of nature and passionate human right, would be but to turn upon her the bloodhounds of infamy and scandal, which guard the social territory.

With instinct and custom thus struggling within him, the one and the other getting in turn the upper hand, he proceeded to finish his day's work.

He had some professional calls to make, and it was not surprising if one or two of his patients detected, under his smooth speech, a languor of voice and brilliancy of eye, which led them to commiserate him upon 'sickening for something.'

But he completed his duties, listened patiently to querulous complaints, sympathised with the plethoric asthma of the dowager's pug, comforted the forlorn mother of six measles-stricken youngsters, prescribed poultices and pills, and otherwise comported himself professionally, then drew a deep breath as he left the last house, and with a vigorous



movement threw off the doctor and resumed the man.

He was not far from Harley Street, and his rapid walking took him soon to his cousin's door. He strode upstairs, and entered the drawing-room. Dr. Janet sat quietly by herself, awaiting the summons of the dinner-bell.

'I have come to dinner, Janet,' he said. 'Have you anything good? I am horribly hungry.'

She glanced at him, and gathered that something more than hunger pressed him.

'Five minutes will show us,' she answered simply, 'and give you time to brush your hair.'

He got up and looked into a mirror.

'Great Scott! what an untidy brute I am,' he ejaculated, and left the room.

Meanwhile, a maid brought in a message.

'If you please, ma'am, Miss Phyllis sends her love, and will you excuse her at dinner, as her head is bad, and send her a cup of tea?'

'Now, I wonder what is in the wind,' the doctor asked herself irritably. The long half-hour before dinner was not her best time.

'Tell Miss Phyllis I will excuse her not coming down, but I will not excuse her making her dinner of tea,' she said, in an awful voice.

'Anyone called?' Liveing inquired casually, as they sat at soup,

‘No one. Who should call?’

‘All right, Janet, don’t get cross. Let me give you some sherry. Where’s Phyllis?’

‘Oh! so that is what you came for, is it? Have you forgotten your good resolutions?’

‘I have not.’

‘It is quite useless, Paul. I will not have it.’

These conversational scraps were interjected spasmodically, as the maids were momentarily absent on their duties. Then the talk drifted other ways.

When at last the entry of dessert signalled the exit of the servants, Paul asked carelessly, ‘Did Phyllis tell you anything?’

‘No. Is there anything to tell me?’

‘De Richeville—’

‘Good heavens!’

‘Pounced on her this evening as she was leaving the hospital. Pounced on me too. I guess you will soon be making his acquaintance. I gave him this address.’

‘Goodness! what is to be done?’

Dr. Janet was herself again. The impending catastrophe focussed her energies, gathering them from little extraneous channels, where they had trickled irritably.

‘*We* can do nothing,’ he said moodily. ‘She must decide for herself. I can’t see that we have

the right even to advise her, certainly not to persist in her desertion of him.'

'It would be monstrous.'

'It is the law and the custom.'

'But she will never yield. She will never consent to live with him.'

'Poor Phyl. She is only a girl.'

'Nevertheless, I tell you, Paul, you, with your big frame and Napoleonic frown, would be easier to manage. However, we shall see.'

'I wish my big frame and Napoleonic frown could bear the brunt of it for her,' he said dejectedly.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Age, thou art sham'd !  
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods !

AN hour later, Dr. Janet, the Marquis de Richeville and Phyllis were experiencing a somewhat heated and volcanic atmosphere in the seclusion of the doctor's comfortable drawing-room.

Meanwhile, Paul strode savagely up and down the library.

'Ring the bell three times, Janet,' he had said when she left him, 'and I will come up and throw him into the street.'

But the looked-for—and it must be confessed hoped-for—summons did not come, and Liveing had no more congenial work for his fingers than that of impatiently arranging the beloved one's books and papers.

Meanwhile, Phyllis stood up white and miserable before her husband.

'I have done you nothing but wrong,' she said.

'I have no right to ask your forgiveness, but, oh, Louis, the wrong was in marrying, not in leaving you.'

'You were a little fool,' he answered. 'You got some silly school-girl notion into your head, and you were frightened by your own folly. You are older now, and have probably grown wiser. I am willing to excuse and take you home.'

She looked very lovely in her timidity and youthfulness, with soft tremors of feeling shadowing her face, dark rings deepening her eyes.'

'For three years I have been seeking you,' he said. 'I have been put to the utmost trouble and expense hunting after you—hunting after my wife.'

There was a raggedness, as of shreds of feeling, in his voice.

'To you, madam,' he went on, turning abruptly upon the elder woman, with a harsh change of note, 'I will say nothing. There is nothing to be said which a man may properly say to a woman. I do not know what your intention has been, but you have behaved illegally, and you may be thankful if I take no action in the matter.'

'You need not threaten,' Dr. Janet rejoined. 'It will have no weight. She is, of course, legally yours, but, sir, if you have any compunction—if you are a gentleman, you will not take her against her will.'

‘She is my wife,’ he replied. ‘Most men, treated as she has treated me, would throw her off—repudiate her utterly. She has deserved it.’

‘She was so young.’

‘That is her only excuse.’

‘Louis,’ Phyllis put in humbly, ‘I have not spent the time frivolously. I have been working hard; I am nearly ready to take my degree.’

‘So I understand,’ he said with a sneer. ‘I am glad to be in time to save you from such idiocy. I had no intention of marrying a bluestocking.’

‘I did not know. I had seen so little. Oh, why did you ask me to marry you?’

‘You said “yes” readily enough,’ he replied, coarsely. ‘I did you an honour; my name is old, my house is illustrious in the pages of history. I made you my wife.’

‘Sir,’ Dr. Janet interposed, ‘has the world so blinded you, are your eyes so filled with its dust, that you do not see nature’s most precious worth in her? Can you think *your* hand, were it a king’s, could honour hers, which is white with a girl’s beautiful purity?’

‘Madam,’ he said, with an affected shrug of the shoulders, and an evil look at the dark, strong face before him, ‘I repeat I have nothing to say to you that I may say with credit to myself.’

‘I have no wish to interfere between you,’ she

persisted, fixing him with stern eyes. 'But I cannot patiently hear a man like you—pardon me if I speak plainly—a man with your reputation, tell my little girl that in any least degree he can do her honour. If *she* do not, I know the world, sir, and I tell you—but *she* shall decide, she shall decide.'

'One need not seek beyond yourself for the reason of my shameful treatment,' he replied. 'It is easy to see she is not the most to blame. It is you. And perhaps—Phyllis,' he demanded, suddenly turning to her with a scowl, 'who is that young man you spoke to to-night? Ah!'

The truth sprang out of her clear eyes, it painted itself on her flushing cheek.

She answered nothing.

'It was time I came,' he said after a pause, during which he was gazing searchingly at her, while honest Janet shifted uneasily in her chair. 'I have come not an hour too soon—apparently not soon enough,' he persisted, and a cold anger blanched his face. 'I shall ask you to explain this later; at present you will put on your cloak and come with me.'

'Where?' Phyllis asked wildly.

'Where I choose. Home!'

'Oh, I have no home but this,' she cried. 'Aunt Janet, say this may still be my home. Say you will keep me with you.'

‘My dear,’ Dr. Janet said quietly, ‘I am always your friend.’

A less stout heart would have quailed beneath the look he threw at her.

‘Oh, Louis,’ Phyllis pleaded, holding appealing hands to him, ‘be kind, let me stay here. I am so happy, and you have so much in your life. I can never leave Aunt Janet.’

‘Nor Uncle John,’ he added, with a sneer.

‘Oh,’ she urged, ‘I can never go with you.’

He made a movement forward, but Dr. Janet, in a moment, placed her big frame between them.

‘Sir,’ she said composedly, ‘you forget yourself.’

‘Kindly stand out of my way,’ he insisted angrily, recovering his composure. ‘Now, Phyllis, let me have no more of this nonsense. Put on your things and come with me.’

Then Phyllis came forward slowly, and laid a hand on his arm.

‘Louis,’ she said, looking up at him with steady eyes, ‘I will *never* go with you. You may do what you will, but, I tell you, I will die a thousand times rather than go with you.’

‘You love that dark scoundrel.’ he cried violently.

She was silent, looking at him quietly. Then the pent-up rage and passion of those three long disappointed years rushed like a torrent over him, sweeping the reins of his control away like straws.



He eyed her furiously, and struck her on the mouth.

She shrank a little, but still stood white and erect, while the proud blood fled her lips, and then leapt back in a rebellious tide of shame.

A moment she waited, lifting defiant blazing eyes to him.

‘Better that than that you should kiss me,’ she said, and, with a sudden weakness, fell against a couch with a burst of tears.

‘Curse it!’ he vociferated. ‘See what you have made me do with your infernal airs!’

In a frenzy he rushed from the room.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Oh ! it is excellent  
To have a giant's strength ; but it is tyrannous  
To use it like a giant.

‘DON’T tell Paul,’ Phyllis entreated with a shiver, lifting her sobbing head. ‘Oh, don’t shame me before him.’

‘Let me look, dear. Are you hurt?’ Dr. Janet moved towards her.

But just then Liveing, hearing De Richeville’s exit, came striding up the stairs, and in terror lest he should see the shameful mark across her mouth, Phyllis flung her head down again, burying her face in a cushion.

Paul went and stood by her.

‘What did he say?’ he asked. ‘What has happened?’

‘Oh, general bad language all round,’ Dr. Janet answered savagely, ‘as usual resulting in nothing. Phyl refuses to have anything to do with him, and he was consequently agreeable.’

He laid his hand on the curly head.

‘Don’t cry,’ he said softly; ‘he isn’t worth it.’

‘Do not suppose her tears are on his account,’ Dr. Janet protested scornfully, ‘the old curmudgeon!’

‘Look up, Phyl. It’s a wretched business, but, for goodness’ sake, don’t cry.’

He smoothed her hair gently, and tried to see her face, but she shuddered and drew away from him.

‘Oh, don’t touch me,’ she whispered between her sobs. ‘Do go away, Paul; I want to be alone.’

‘You had better leave her to herself,’ Dr. Janet added in her authoritative way. ‘She has been horribly tried.’

He stooped and kissed the hair-coiled head, and left them.

Phyllis presently controlled her sobs and lifted her face. The eyes and lids were wet and red, and the delicate skin of the lips and cheek was raised in a scarlet wheal. She brushed back the tangle of her hair.

‘How dared he!’ she cried, with a very flame in her eyes and voice. ‘Oh, I could kill him. Why have men the power and strength to shame us so? If I were a man—but I am only a weak woman, and all the rage in my hands wouldn’t hurt him.’

The other sat quiet.

‘When nature gave men strength,’ she went on between her clenched teeth, ‘she ought to have given them the feeling to use it properly. How dared he touch me!’

‘He’s a brute, Phyl, and you behaved finely.’

‘I don’t care for that, or anything!’ she cried. ‘I am only ashamed that he could hurt me.’

‘He was not proud of it, my dear. And he will be still less proud of it later. If men are stronger than women, and use their strength in so unmanly a way, most of them, at least, have the grace to be decently ashamed of it.’

‘He will not! He will not! He will be glad,’ the girl raved, scrubbing with her handkerchief the scarlet welt across her mouth. ‘Are we women always to be so helpless?’

‘But, my dear,’ Dr. Doyle remonstrated, ‘you would not have struck him back.’

‘Perhaps not, but I should have liked, if I had wanted it, to have been able to throw him out of the window, as Paul could.’

‘Bat, Phyllis.’

‘Oh, I know it’s detestable and all that, she persisted, still scrubbing vengefully at her cheek. ‘Of course it’s unwomanly to do anything but kiss the hand that strikes you.’

‘How you talk.’

‘Well, so would you if he had dared to hit you,

and if your face were tingling with shame as mine does.'

'For goodness' sake let it alone. You will take the skin off.'

'I don't care, so long as his touch comes off too.'

'Phyllis, don't be so childish. Nothing another person does can shame you really, only what you do yourself.'

'Oh, that's theory, Aunt Janet, but when all your blood is rushing about you in hot disgust, practice is rather different.'

Soon her voice softened and she tried to smile, but the swelling stiffened her lips, and she could make only a very pitiful attempt.

After a few days, during which she kept her room, in order that no one should observe the evidences of his insolent touch, she returned to her work, applying herself industriously to it.

She attended lectures and made notes; she wrote abstracts of 'interesting cases'; she bandaged and did her 'dressings' with great assiduity, but her heart ached oftentimes for a sight of her professor, for the sound of his voice.

It takes a good many years of mental plane-shifting before emotional impulses can be altogether displaced by intellectual interests.

The lonely, wearying sea-restlessness came back

upon her, fretting her with the fever of its longing and discontent.

But the memory of her marriage bound her, and forced hot, shameful tears from her eyes. How had she been able, she wondered, with an ever fresh amazement—how had she been able to accept as husband a man for whom she had felt only the calm liking of a child?

‘How could I do it?’ she cried. ‘How can I have been so cold-blooded and coarse? I could have had no love for him—only tolerance, and I would have let him buy me with his houses and diamonds. Why did not mother tell me what love would be when it came? How can a girl know the difference before she cares?’

But Phyllis’s mother, like most mothers, had been only too well satisfied to see her young daughter easily and well provided for, laying upon the compunctious prickings of her conscience the opiates with which society eases itself—viz, that things are ‘much of a muchness;’ that they have a comfortable tendency to rub down all right; that, after all, marriages made in the radiance of heaven do not turn out better than those arranged in the atmosphere of the counting-house.

Society is fond of flattering itself with ingenious lies. It loves to exercise its adroitness and skill in

throwing dust into its own and its neighbours' eyes, but it can never honestly believe that the winter of a loveless union quickens and fructifies the soul like the spring-time of a heart-felt devotion, even though this last but a season.

The girls of the present day, daughters of our worldly-wise maturity, are not, in the majority of cases, dragged unwilling victims to the altar, as were the sentimental damsels of the beginning of the century—if we may believe the novel-writers. They are not constrained against their wish to cruel unions of May and December, Maid and Mammon ; they feel no strong repulsion towards the good *parti* ; on the contrary, they may even entertain a cool liking for him, a comfortable tolerance, but such sentiments do not save the 'successful marriage' from being but too frequently the tomb of love—a tomb into which are cast the best possibilities of a life.

And from such tombs the decay and death of nations spring.

The greater number of our most cultured acquaintance are mere bores in the passionless crudity of their emotions. The offspring of cool tolerance, or actual repulsion—they are born with only rudimentary love capacities, as others are born blind of eye, or paralysed of limb.

One need but look into the faces of the children

in order to measure the parents' meagre love. Here has been no divine sweet madness to steal Promethean fires for the spirit of its firstborn.

The souls of the impassioned, kissing, meet—the unimpassioned only feel dull lip on lip.

It was the fine instinct of high nervous sensibility that had shown Phyllis, in one brief moment, the spectres of her husband's life. She was as ignorant of the facts which go to make up an existence such as his, as she would have been utterly unable to comprehend their impulse.

High-minded girls of her stamp, if the depths of the social evil were shown them all at once, would seek suicide shuddering, and, in the fervour of their purity, thank God for giving them so gracious a means of escape.

But the growth of knowledge is gradual, and fact upon fact shrivels, with hot brand, the young faith, till the welling waters of forgetfulness and hope flow once more over the fire-touched spot, and soothe it again to green health.

The laughing hands of a bad woman may, in a space, so tangle a man's soul in scarlet threads, that it shall take a good woman her lifetime of toil and tears to free it.

Of all this Phyllis knew nothing. She knew only, that when first her husband had thrown off



the mask of convention, and disclosed himself, he was abhorrent to her.

She suffered bitterly, and in some part expiated the fault of her ignorance and young selfishness. It was not only that her marriage separated her irrevocably from the man she loved, but it sickened her to know it gave a vague, terrible power over her to the man she loathed.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

She's mine by right of marriage !—she is mine !

THE days went on and De Richeville made no sign. With womanish apprehension as to the prerogatives of the law, she feared to open an envelope lest this should reveal some dread judicial mandate.

Engaged just then in professional duties which entailed some amount of night-work, she was returning one early morning from attendance on a poor patient.

The day was breaking mistily, seeming loath to rub sleep from its shadowy lids, and cast aside dawn's swathings. A heavy dew lay over everything, the air was sweet, though dim and damp, and the flame-touch of the tardy sun had sent no rosy blood to the morning's fingers.

Phyllis lingered as she went, moved by the widely-different aspect of the streets in their sleep-silence, and seeing the mysterious desertedness

which spoke of the soft-breathing rest of tired workers.

Not so universal was the slumber as her fancy pictured, impelling her to plant her feet gently, lest she should waken the religious stillness and rouse some toiler ere his time.

For the treadmill of work in a great city is never at rest. Though it swings heavier and faster to the zenith of the day, yet through the night it still turns languidly, moved by the weary feet of necessitous labour, watched by its weary eyes.

Man toils ceaselessly through the sweet, sleeping-hours, with nerves fevered or heavy for their natural quiet, with the tomb-like silence of aloneness round him harshly magnifying the echo of his work.

It is always pathetic, whether this duty of night-toil be fulfilled by the nurse watching the weary sick, or whether it be the sailor cleaving with keen sight the sea's mysterious darkness, or the fireman guarding the safety of the city, or the baker leavening his dough for the morrow's need, or the police with lynx eye on the common foe, or the pointsman holding in the turn of his hand the lives of hundreds. The thought of those who work while we forget moves us strangely with the sense of a trust faithfully and patiently fulfilled, though nature, with a leaden finger on the lid, tempts to the proneness of sleep.

But Phyllis as she made her way homewards, dreamed fancifully of a great universal peace, and woke with a start to hear a cab rattle noisily into the street.

By one of those curious chances that narrow the coil of circumstance, the cab occupant proved to be De Richeville.

As he was driven towards her his keen glance, cunning to detect the lines of feminine charm, dwelt on her graceful points. Then, as she loomed up out of the dusk, he recognised her.

Stopping the cab, he got out quickly, and following, soon overtook her. He grasped her by the arm.

‘What are you doing here?’ he demanded harshly. ‘This is not a suitable hour for my wife to be walking the streets.’

She turned and faced him.

‘*You* are out,’ she said coldly.

He shrugged his shoulders.

‘*I!* I am different. It is ridiculous to make such a comparison. I can take care of myself.’

‘And I can,’ she responded quietly. ‘Please loose me, and let me go home.’

He kept his hand firmly upon her. She lifted her sensitive, pale face, and laid her gloved fingers on his detaining hand. His grasp was unsteady,

his eyelids were bloodshot, his breath was heavily alcoholic.

‘By God,’ he swore, ‘I will not let you go. I will not have my wife wandering about the streets in such a disreputable fashion.’

‘I have been doing my work,’ she said. ‘Let me go. I will call for help if you hold me longer.’

‘Do,’ he sneered ; ‘but you will find no one will help a wife against her husband. I can force you now into that cab, take you home and compel you to live with me. You are married to me, and you cannot undo my right over you.’

‘Oh, but I will, I will !’ she cried, in a low voice, struggling with him.

‘I intend to stand no more nonsense,’ he went on, resisting her easily. ‘Phyllis, I insist upon your returning to your senses and coming home with me now. You are nothing but a simpleton when you refuse. I can give you horses and carriages, and fine clothes, and take you about the world. If you remain as you are, you will grow into a frump of a bluestocking, and know nothing outside hospitals and dead-houses. It’s only because you have not tried the good things life has to give that you flatter yourself you despise them.’

‘Will you loose my arm ?’ she cried hotly, looking round for help.

The cabman had withdrawn his cab to a distance

and kept his head turned judiciously away. The affair was none of his business, and he had no intention whatsoever of interfering between his patron and the girl.

The street was quite deserted, and with his persistent hold upon her she began to feel frightened.

She shrank from the idea of calling for help, though she had threatened it. It would be so horribly undignified to make a scene.

‘I can do exactly as I please with you,’ he continued. ‘If it were in the open day, and the street crowded, no one would have any right to prevent me from taking my wife home with me.’

‘It cannot be,’ she protested; ‘the law could not be so unjust!’

‘Nevertheless, what I state is strictly true,’ he rejoined, ‘and you had better make up your mind without any more fuss. If you call, you may bring the police, but they will not interfere when you have to admit I am your husband. And even should they take us into custody, the magistrate would insist upon your going with me.’

He spoke quietly now, and with so much conviction that a sudden dread came over her. Her face paled, and she began to tremble.

‘You have never even seen my house—*your* house, Phyllis. I fitted your rooms charmingly,

and you have not done me the honour of even looking into them. Come and see them, you silly girl, and I will be bound you won't be in a hurry to leave them. You shall travel, and have anything and everything you wish.'

Her fears were clamorously seeking ways and means of escape, and her large eyes rested on him with an avoidant look.

'Don't be afraid of me,' he persisted, marking with his hot, red-lidded gaze the charm of her tired face. 'You shall live alone as long as you like. Only, I fancy you will soon come to your senses, and think I deserve a little gratitude and consideration.'

He talked with wily Gallic tongue, gradually assuming the courtesy of speech and manner she had first known in him.

'I offer you a thousand apologies,' he went on, 'for my behaviour the other evening. I was mad, mad for love of you and disappointment. How could you do it, you pretty minx? How could you leave me without you, when you knew how I adored you? And I have not changed. I am fonder of you than ever. Come, Phyllis, my angel, leave the old doctor-woman and come home, and you shall be a little queen. Come and you shall see your handsome house. You do not know, in your charming simplicity, the good things money can buy.'

‘But I do not care for such things,’ she said more gently. He seemed really to care about her, and she was touched by his urgency, though she shrank from the occasional intimacy of his tone. ‘And I am happy in my working life. Oh, she cried, ‘indeed I do regret it all so bitterly. I would give anything if it could be undone.’

‘There is no going back,’ he replied persuasively, ‘and the only way is to make the best of things. I cannot be a charming young husband to you, my Marquise, but I shall be a very fond one. You will never repent coming out of your ridiculous fool’s paradise.’

‘Oh, please, let me go,’ she besought shamefacedly. ‘I am most truly sorry, but, indeed, I can never be your wife.’

His hand upon her shook savagely. He loosed his hold, his face turning livid.

‘Oh, you shall come to it, I swear!’ he cried hoarsely. ‘You *are* my wife, and you shall come to it.’

He walked some paces forward, while she stood uncertain what to do. Then he turned and came back.

He was controlling himself by a strong effort. He was determined to have her. He would try all means, fair and foul, but she should be his.

‘Phyllis,’ he said more composedly, ‘I am lenient



with you because I believe you misled, and I have no wish to use force, but you *must* give in. You can do nothing else. The law is not to be set at defiance by a girl, and you must make up your mind to it, that sooner or later your home will be with me. But I am willing to try quiet means first. Before you decide finally, and compel me to use stronger measures, come and see your home—see the fine things you reject. Wait,’ as she made a gesture of dissent, ‘I only ask you to come for an hour, just to see what is waiting for you. It is not a great deal to ask—from my wife.’

He stood in her way, and tired and worn out by the fatigues of the night and his importunities, ashamed to deny him so small a request, made humbly where he had the fullest right, she consented.

‘When?’ she asked wearily.

‘Choose your own time. This afternoon.’

There was a restless gleaming in his eyes. He had gained a point, and in her pale submission, with the tired droop of her graceful figure, he was reflecting that she was worth fighting for.

‘Very well! But it will be no good, Louis.’

‘You will come alone. You need not be afraid.’

‘I am not afraid,’ she answered, looking at him out of her quiet eyes.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp !

A simple maiden in her flower  
Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms.

WHEN Phyllis knocked upon the great door of Richeville House, which stands in Piccadilly behind a high-walled court-yard, it was opened by two tall footmen, resplendent in silver-laced livery.

She was evidently expected, and the powdered lackeys, bowing low before her, ushered her through the fine, oak-pannelled hall into a corridor, dadoed with rich tapestries. The paraquet floor was so highly polished—that most barbarous of fashions—that her unaccustomed feet started upon several misdirected expeditions, but she succeeded in recalling them to a sense of the proprieties, and reached the end without having measured her length upon the slippery places.

A heavy, plush *portière* was thrown aside, and she was announced to the vast magnificence of the drawing-room.

The Marquis stood waiting for her. He came forward and took her hand, noting the bewildered admiration of her glance as it rested upon the tasteful splendour of the room.

It seemed to her a perfect fairyland of white and gold, upholstered, as it was, in a wealth of these shades, from the tiniest footstool to the great folded curtains which divided its vastness into two portions.

A gold and white frieze, of antique design, bordered the tapestried walls; the ceiling being formed by painted mirrors framed in white and gold. White silk-shaded lamps filled the room with softened light; and beside these were bowls of hothouse flowers, beautifully arranged; and spreading palms and ferns and blossoming plants. The air was heavy with their perfume, blending with that contributed by a small fountain of scented water, which threw its pretty spray into a silver basin. On the hearth a great fire blazed, reflecting itself upon white and gilded tiles. Two fine deerhounds lay before it. These advanced with a friendly sniffing and tail-wagging as De Richeville greeted her. A silver gipsy-kettle sang cheerfully beside a table, which was spread with dainty china and hospitable dishes of cake and fruit.

The spell of the beautiful room was broken the moment her eyes fell upon her husband.

‘Oh, it would have been better for me to have stayed away,’ she exclaimed half-involuntarily, as her hand shrank in his. ‘Let me go now, Louis, and forgive and forget me.’

‘I can never do the latter,’ he answered in his most courtly manner; ‘but you will, at least, let me have the pleasure of your society for an hour. Sit down, child, and you shall give yourself and me some tea.’

She sat down embarrassed and shy, drawing her chair as far from him as she might with civility. He stood near, filling the teapot from the little kettle, and pressing cake and sweetmeats upon her. She drank her tea with a horrible bashfulness, keeping her eyes chiefly upon the friendly dogs, stooping now and again to pat and feed them, as a cover for her awkwardness.

She wished again and again she had not come, and, ere it had begun, longed for the end of this uncomfortable interview.

De Richeville was calm and self-possessed, watching the delicate grace of her cloaked figure, and the soft, shadowy expressiveness of her face. He talked quietly and well, describing, with some clever touches, a tour he had recently made, telling her of things he thought likely to interest her.

He showed her photographs and sketches of picturesque places: Gibraltar’s mysterious rock,

Naples' beautiful bay, the mighty Sphinx and Pyramids, and other marvels.

But not for a moment, for all the luxurious promises so subtly suggested, did she lose her uncontrollable sense of constraint and longing to escape.

She finished her tea very quickly, hoping to shorten her visit, but civility made her wait for his cup, which was long in emptying, as he busied himself to entertain her.

She felt again the same awe of him she had felt in the first days of their acquaintance. And it was far more difficult to deal with and repel him in his present courteous mood, than it had been in his recent outbursts.

She poured a second cup of tea for him, he talking all the while with seductive, flattering assiduity, calling her attention at intervals to the rare and beautiful works of art that filled the room.

At last there could be no further disguising the fact that tea was well over, and Phyllis sat quiet and shy, yet she could not summon courage to take her leave.

All at once he said,—

‘But you must see your own rooms. I had them decorated to please you. They have been shut up since, wasting their sweetness, like the charms of my fair little Marquise.’

Without waiting to hear the objections which rose hastily to her lips, he preceded her up the marble staircase.

Lifting a crimson *portière*, silvered with rich threads, he bade her pass through.

She found herself in a suite of rooms incomparably beautiful. The colours selected were shadings of blue and orange, blended in charming contrast.

Great silver-framed mirrors reflected her grey-clad figure as she passed along, looking like a shadow amid all the brilliant tones.

In the farthest room was a dainty bed, downily covered and delicately draped. Beside it lay a heap of lace-trimmed feminine gear, and a white tea-gown be-puffed and frilled with painted chiffons.

On the silver-mounted toilet-table were costly brushes, jewel-stands and trays, and a magnificent diamond necklet and bracelets lay in open cases.

A wardrobe door seductively ajar tempted investigation of the delicate rich furs and dresses within.

At the fire stood an array of charming shoes, awaiting, as it seemed, the choice of a fair, fastidious mistress.

Phyllis stood entranced to see the lovely things. She forgot all at once the Marquis and her fears, and, with girlish pleasure, flung about her throat an

ostrich boa, which brushed her lightly and alluringly as she moved past it.

She took up the splendid necklace, and, with hypnotised sense, looked into the flashing, dazzling radiance.

The Marquis stood in the background, wearing a pleased, but not a pleasant expression. A deft little French maid, with neat shining head and black gown, waited near.

‘How beautiful it all is,’ Phyllis said under her breath.

‘*Mais oui, madame,*’ agreed the civil maid, in a sibilant whisper, hiding unfathomable thoughts beneath a pair of demure eyelids.

‘It is all yours, you know, Phyllis,’ De Richeville put in softly.

She gave a little shiver at the sound of his voice, and took off the feathery boa. She was standing beside a mirror, and, as she removed the boa, she looked into her own reflected face. It looked back at her, white, sensitive and fair, framed in a silver oval. The clear serenity of her shadowy eyes, whose depths were deepened by the down-droop of her hair, seemed all at once to question her. The level brows were set with a wondering fine gravity. The line of cheek and chin showed delicate and pure, the lips were cool and dewy with the morning of her maidenhood. With a strange,

sudden indrawing of her breath, the meaning of her womanhood, and, with this, a thousand vague and subtle knowledges, quickened within her.

She turned aside, dazed by the white-hot glowing of her thought, and looked again through the beautiful room. Its graceful magnificence seemed all at once to have faded and shrunk. All seemed curiously changed. The diamonds lay now like glittering common glass. Everything showed different beside that strange momentary illumination she had had of a grave girl-face, with all the wonder of straight sincerity and purity upon it.

She broke into a tremble at sight of her own young beauty. The spell of the world and the flesh was lost.

In such a moment, woman, looking into her own eyes, makes with her soul a compact for the everlasting stainlessness of her body. For the first time, the white unblottedness becomes a luminous page, whereon are sacred writings.

In the glow of such a consciousness she learns that not all the world's jewels are as that which lies in her own look.

Phyllis had not at all wavered in her resolution, only she had lingered in the perfumed atmosphere, tempted by the luxury, enervated by its sensuous spell, until all at once she had a vision, and the rest shrank to nothingness.



The Marquis, seeing that glance in the mirror, ground his teeth.

He could not fathom all its meaning, but he saw the barrier it placed between them. For a space his faith in the things of sense fell away, for her look had said an everlasting no to all he offered.

And he raged. He wanted the 'jewel' of that eye more than all other of his possessions. It seemed to him that his desire would know no rest till that was wrought into the settings of his life.

'I must go now,' Phyllis said abruptly.

'Ah, but no, madame,' the maid suggested suavely. 'Madame will wear her white toilette and diamonds, and accompany monsieur to the opera. Is it not so?'

'Are you determined to be obstinate?' De Richeville asked, between his set teeth. 'Will nothing induce you to come to your senses?'

'Why will you ask me?' she said humbly. 'I can never change. Can you not see I shall never change?'

'It is impossible to believe you can be such a little fool. I offer to do everything for you, to give you everything, and you profess no higher ambition than to return to your vulgar working life. But I can tell you, you had better think again before you act. Here is everything the most luxurious woman could need. I will take you to the opera to-night ;

will receive you as if nothing had happened. If you refuse—the matter is already in the hands of my solicitors—you will be dragged into court and make a common scandal. You must give in eventually. Better do so without further rousing me. I tell you, I am not a pleasant foe.’

‘But if you feel like that how can you want me to stay—if you do not care for me?’

‘You are a little fool,’ he answered.

The discreet maid had withdrawn to a distance, and stood, glancing sidelong every now and again at them out of her astute black eyes. She regarded the modestly-attired stranger as a natural idiot, or a clever hypocrite who knew how best to increase her value.

‘Good-bye,’ Phyllis said, shrinking past him. ‘It would have been better if I had not come. Nothing will make me feel differently.’

‘By God,’ he burst out, ‘you shall not go. You shall stay now you are here. I will be defied no longer.’

‘I will not stay,’ she answered resolutely; ‘and you dare not keep me. Oh, Louis, think what you do. I would give my life to alter it all, but I will never stay with you.’

He moved towards her furiously. But she faced him, and he fell back, baffled and enraged.

After all she was his wife, and he could not make

a scandal. Moreover, nothing was to be done by further rousing her against him.

‘Well! go if you will,’ he said, with flaring anger, ‘and abide by the consequences. You found me kind now, but I swear you shall meet with very scant mercy when the law forces you back to me.’

With no further word, with only a wild impulse of escape, she fled from the beautiful rooms, down the great staircase, through the lackey-littered hall, and out into the street.

She drew deep, joyous breaths of the fresh, cool air—the air of liberty—and with rapid feet sped homeward.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

The law is a sort of hocus-pocus science, that smiles in yer face while it picks yer pocket ; and the glorious uncertainty of it is of mair use to the professors than the justice of it !

NOT long after this the case of De Richeville *v.* De Richeville came on for hearing.

By means of his position, the Marquis succeeded in getting it tried *in camera*. He was not anxious that his name should serve to exercise the sensational abilities of journalism, and advertise him to a detestable notoriety.

Under the circumstances of its privacy, the proceedings were of a somewhat informal character, and the judge, marking the defendant's young terrified face, admonished her in fatherly words.

He counselled her to place herself under her husband's care as soon and as quietly as possible, urged the responsibilities of the position she had voluntarily undertaken, and the claim of the vows she had made.

‘ You have no complaint to make against him. He has shown himself kind and indulgent towards

you, in spite of your desertion. How can you justify and persist in it ? ’

‘ Oh, but, sir,’ Phyllis cried in a low voice, ‘ I do not love him. I implore you not to put me into his power. I can never love him, and I will never live with him.’

The judicial majesty permitted itself to smile.

‘ We have no spells whereby we can compel your affection, though, I fear, we must compel you,’ the judge answered, not apparently without reluctance. His keen look placed her young fairness in odious contrast with the *blasé* profligate appearance of her husband.

The character of the latter was widely known, and the kind judge would willingly have given the girl a loophole of escape had any legal technicality justified it. But the plaintiff’s case was flawless, and the Court made an order that the wife should repent her of her obstinacy and return to her husband’s roof.

‘ I will kill myself rather,’ Phyllis said with quivering lips.

Upon this the judge leaned forward and spoke to De Richeville in a low voice. ‘ I was obliged to decide in your favour,’ he said ; ‘ you have the law on your side, but let me suggest to you, as a man, to try at least to regain the girl’s liking before you insist upon her return to you. In my capacity

here I have had no small experience of women, and your little wife has more strength of character than you may give her credit for.

De Richeville bowed indifferently. He scarcely heard. His eyes were fixed on Phyllis, as she left the court with Dr. Janet.

But the mighty authority of the law appeared to exert but little influence in the case of De Richeville *versus* De Richeville.

For, despite its formidable mandate, requiring her to return forthwith to her loving and affectionate spouse, Phyllis showed no sign of compliance, and the blue and orange boudoir in Piccadilly awaited her in lonely magnificence.

At a second application on the part of De Richeville she was adjudged guilty of that most awful of offences, contempt of court ; yet still, despite the terrible curse, she did not appear at all the worse.

For she went on steadily with her studies, and pursued the general even tenor of existence, making acquaintance with the rigour of legal penalties and prison life only in imagination.

‘Do not be afraid, my dear,’ Dr. Janet reassured her. ‘We are emerging, and, at the latter end of this nineteenth century, we are not likely to see unwilling wives dragged shrieking through the streets. Things are resolving themselves, and the husband’s power waneth !’

## CHAPTER XXX.

I am free—I have burst through my galling chains.

‘MADAM,—We regret to be compelled to communicate to you the death of your husband, the Marquis de Richeville, which occurred suddenly some ten days since.

‘For the last two years our lamented client has suffered from a serious nerve affection, but his medical advisers had not anticipated so speedy a demise. The news we have the melancholy task of conveying to you will, we fear, come upon you as a severe shock. Beyond the mere mention of your name, and some expressions of regret with regard to your relations with him, you have no place in his will, the estate and personalty devolving upon his nephew, Mr. Morris Purcell. The remains of the late Marquis were interred in the family vault at Eu, where the other members—on the paternal side—of the family. Regretting to be the

medium of this lamentable news,—We remain,  
madam, faithfully yours,

‘JAMES & NEWCOME,  
‘Solicitors, Broad St., City.’

This letter, addressed to Madame la Marquise de Richeville, reached Phyllis some two months after the trial recorded in the last chapter.

She passed it over to Dr. Janet, and hurriedly left the room.

‘Umph!’ commented the latter, as she finished reading it, ‘Messrs. James & Newcome express a very decent regret, which, I fear, I cannot endorse. Dr. Janet, you have lost your partner! She will forthwith go over to the firm of Liveing, and you will be obliged to train up some other young woman, upon whom to cast your medical mantle!’

Nevertheless, though she grumbled considerably, she was by no means ill-pleased at the turn events had taken.

‘Cupid has forestalled Æsculapius,’ she confided to Liveing. ‘The next girl I select for my partnership shall be a plain, certain-aged, spectacled neuter. I will duenna no more pretty faces.’

‘Pretty women are not the only ones who succumb to the blind god’s darts,’ he said sententiously. ‘Indeed, statistics go to prove pretty women far less easily disposed of than plain ones.’



Don't rely on spectacles and apparent unsuitability, cousin, or you will be "left" a second time.'

'Anyhow, I will fight shy of the fire that has burnt me. If I am to make a fool of myself again, it shall be on totally opposite lines.'

'I say, Janet, what a grand stroke of luck it was that brought her to you.'

'Luck for you,' she retorted ; 'but I am none so saintlike that I overflow with gratitude to turn luck my way only to fill *your* hands.'

'Oh, you were a good Samaritan, our kind fairy, cousin.'

'Maybe, but another time I shall keep my oil for myself. I am fond of her, Paul. I am none so fey to part with her.'

'Poor Janet !'

'Perhaps it will be "poor Paul" presently, if it so happen that his skittish bride comes back to her aunt at the end of the honeymoon,' she returned viciously.

'Oh, I am not afraid,' he answered, looking with luminous eyes. 'But tell me when it is to be, Janet. How long must her term of widowhood last? Under the circumstances, will the wicked world be greatly scandalised if we speedily convert the funeral baked meats into a wedding-breakfast? Be merciful, Janet. I have known her four years.'

'But you have not cared for her very long.'

‘Some weeks,’ he answered, smiling.

‘Oh, you men!’ she cried wrathfully. ‘What vapourers you are! Wait, strengthen your feeling, mature it, check it, steady it, leaven it, that what you give may be worth a woman’s taking.’

‘Janet, when may I get the licence? When might one decently marry?’

‘In six months.’

‘Make it three,’ he urged.

‘I imagine it won’t rest with me,’ she answered sharply.

Three months later, Phyllis de Richeville was quietly married to Paul Liveing. As Phyllis persisted in taking her degree before the wedding, the lovers, during their short engagement, had but little time for love-making.

Paul begged to be allowed to sit with her while she read, but after a few evenings the attempt to combine a wooing with the serious task of preparing for a medical examination was abandoned.

‘How can I work when you are looking at me?’ Phyllis protested, blushing. ‘And you will not keep to your book. You *will* glance up.’

‘One must reflect on what one reads,’ he explained gravely.

‘But you cannot reflect if you are looking at me.’

‘It is not easy, I confess. But, Phyl, now tell

the whole truth, was I the only one whose gaze wandered ?’

‘Well,’ she admitted, confused, ‘that is another reason why you should leave me to myself.’

‘So I was not the only culprit—you confess it.’

‘Paul,’ she said, ‘you have such lovely eyes !’

So he was banished, and employed a good deal of time in stalking up and down Dr. Janet’s rooms and staircase, waiting for the half-hour he was permitted between the conclusion of her studies and retirement for the night.

It was in vain the good doctor protested against his restless wanderings.

‘You are like a big, dissatisfied Goth over-running the place, scattering disorder and confusion everywhere.’

‘Muttering curses against women’s rights and men’s wrongs, as I certainly have cause to do,’ he grumbled.

‘Ah ! you will have enough of her soon.’

‘Life is short !’

‘So is love—proverbially. And you will be coming presently to tramp away my carpets because she is *not* here, as you do now because she *is*.’

‘You are a prophet, Janet ! You mistook your vocation when you took to physic. But—she is coming. I can hear her put away her books and

lock her desk. I can hear her on the landing—on the stairs—'

'And I suppose I shall have to retire and leave you two deluded creatures to kiss.'

'Janet, you are an angel!'

'Whose most admirable discretion lies in her wings!' and with this Parthian shot she retreated.

'Phyllis, why do you waste so many hours away from me?' he protested, as she came in, pale and weary. 'Why do you not throw away your books, and let us be happy?'

'I slept and dreamed that life was beauty;

I woke and found that life was duty,'

she quoted, with a quiet smile.

'I will have no such morbid wakings,' he insisted. 'You should find sleeping and waking, life and duty, all beauty—nothing but beauty, my Phil. Ay, and you shall—you shall. I will fold you in my arms and shut out all the rest.'

'Ah, Paul,' she whispered, her white cheek lying against his shoulder, 'I have such terrible fancies of trouble coming to you and me. Do you remember in *Jane Eyre* how Jane dreams and dreams of a little crying child she cannot quiet? And I do—night after night. I feel it cling to me and hear it wailing—wailing. And sometimes it dies, and I see its dead face. Oh, Paul, Paul, if anything should happen to you, my dear, my dear.'

‘What a child you are, Phyl. What is likely to happen? What could happen? It is only because you are over-worked. I tell you, give it up, give up this exam. Wait for another year. I will put it right with the aunt. She does not want you to make yourself ill.’

‘No, I will not do that,’ she said quietly; ‘I must pass. And it is not the work. I am used to the work. But the fear, Paul, and the dreams.’

‘You need a prescription—’

‘Chloral and bromide,’ she interrupted, smiling. ‘Ah! what materialists you men are. I think, after all, I shall have to give you up, Paul, and devote everything to my studies, and try to show how many things there are ’twixt heaven and earth undreamt of in your masculine medicine.’

‘You could not do it,’ he insisted vehemently. ‘You dare not give me up. And you are too fond of me, Phyl. You know you would rather look into my fine eyes than peer into no end of undiscovered philosophies.’

‘The vanity—the vanity!’ she answered playfully, looking fondly into the orbs he boasted.

‘Oh, Phyl, throw it up, throw away your books. Let us be married next week, and I will take you to your beloved sea, and bring the roses to your cheeks again!’ he cried, with a sudden outbreak of tumultuous feeling.

The roses grew beneath his kisses, wild, blushing flowers that crimsoned richly and flung their perfume into her quickened breath.

She laid her hand upon his breast and stilled the rising passion.

‘No, no,’ she said, her voice trembling faintly in her throat. ‘Don’t ask it, Paul, my dear. It will come in good time. And I will tell you the sea’s secrets while we sit at her feet.’

‘Oh, my love, my little Phyllis, I am lonely without you.’

‘I know, I know,’ she answered gently, caressing with quiet lips the hand hers held, ‘but it is not long, Paul, and I shall be with you always.’

So she took her degree, and soon after this they were married one morning at a little church in Mayfair, with but few to witness their happiness and disconcert the bridegroom, though it was generally conceded that this latter comported himself with unusual composure under the most trying of masculine ordeals.

Dr. Janet, in a fine new silk gown, upon which the *modiste* had laboured long to put into it what she described as ‘style,’ an aerial phantasy which fled precipitately before the good doctor’s inches—Dr. Janet beamed upon them, and, for the first time since more than a decade, shed some half-dozen tears.

‘To see those two so devoted is enough to force any woman into making an old fool of herself,’ she confided crossly to her handkerchief, which was the recipient and only witness of her folly.

‘Paul,’ whispered his cousin, Geoffry on being introduced to the bride, ‘Paul, you are a ruffian. You have carried off my fate—the girl I rescued from the station-master four years ago. Has the mystery been solved? Was it a diamond necklace or an elopement? And those eyes, Paul—how about the eyes? Are they all that I said? You’ve betrayed me, old man, and I’ll never forgive you—and I don’t believe you’ve heard a word I’ve said, confound you!’

. . . . .

The day before the wedding, the Marquis de Richeville travelled from Dover to London in the club train.

‘I will stop her as she gets into the carriage,’ he said, with an evil chuckle. ‘She shall send her dark scoundrel to cool his heels and his passion on a honeymoon like mine, and see how he likes it. So they gave me only four months. One has but to come to life again to find the smallness of his value. The little wretch!’

The Marquis did not look as if his recent demise had agreed with him. He looked aged

and shattered, seeming but a wreck of his former self.

‘It’s a capital trick,’ he continued, his hands trembling and working nervously. ‘What a fellow that Newcome is! Gad, he’s a scamp, but he’s a cute one. Though his price is damned high. I must cut down his price. Bigamy—that’s what you’re about, my Marquise. You shall take your choice—the law or me, and the law won’t be so lenient with you this time. Women are easily scared, and she won’t care to have her handsome friend sent to goal. They haven’t a tittle of evidence, not a tittle—thanks to the inventor of vanishing ink. Gad, how fond I am of the little wretch. A man wants a wife in his old age, and,’ examining his shaking, pallid fingers, ‘I’m getting on, getting on.’

Then, in a fit of nervous excitement, he began to weep, the privacy of the *coupé*, in which he sat alone, permitting this indulgence.

‘She has been my ruin,’ he went on. ‘I’ve gone steadily down since she ran away from me. What was it Clark said? D. T? Nonsense, sheer nonsense, my dear doctor. How dare you insult me? What scoundrels these doctors are? They think they know everything. Drink? Well, one must brace oneself. Who was it said “wine is the milk of the aged?” Well, I say “brandy’s the wine of



the elderly." Pretty good that! I say, Bagstock, what d'ye say to this: "Brandy's the—" Gad, the fellow's gone.'

After a silence, during which he remained smiling and chuckling to himself with blue, swollen lips and ghastly look, his aspect changed.

He started up with clenched hands,—

'Ah, you're there, curse you!' he vociferated. 'Only let me drive my fist into your dark face. No, no! Of course he isn't there. There's no one there. What was I thinking of? It's to-morrow, of course. She's going to marry him to-morrow, and she's my wife. Sounds like a joke—but d—n it, it's no joke. Now, sir—you, I mean, with the black eyes—what d'ye mean? Where's my wife? She isn't your wife. It's bigamy! I say it's bigamy!' he shouted, springing up and striking, with his clenched hand, into the opposite corner of the carriage.

The shock sobered him. He fell back limp and quiet.

'The deuce!' he muttered. 'I've rather overdone it. I mustn't take so much again. One's nerves are not what they were. And she ought to be here to look after me. Phyllis, why don't you come and look after me? I'm not well enough to be left alone. I won't hurt you. Phyllis, I swear I won't hurt you. She's afraid—

I struck her. Good God! and I was once a gentleman.'

He broke into a fit of maudlin weeping, then stamped and swore and raved again.

When the train reached Victoria, four men were needed to restrain him, as, under the direction of his valet, who travelled in the same train, he was forced into a carriage and taken home.

This was on the eve of her wedding, and Phyllis woke frequently to the sound of that sobbing child which haunted her, and with whose clinging, peevish hand in hers she wandered through a fevered night.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

To love and to have loved, that is enough. Ask nothing further. There is no other pearl to be found in the dark folds of life.

THREE months passed, and the cloud, which had shown as no bigger than a child's hand, had not broken, though it was silently spreading and darkening the sky that stretched so bright above their happiness.

It seemed that a very lifetime of joy was lived in those few months. Paul's modest house assumed the proportions of a fairy-palace, love's mystic touch transfiguring everything.

How we deceive ourselves, who rely on the upholsterer to make our homes beautiful! Love's fairy fingers weave, in simple homes, from the simplest materials, such wonders, that beside them the brocades and bronzes of luxury are but tawdry things, apeing the worth of treasures thought has touched. Affection broiders the simple gown, and casts a zone of beauty about the beloved. Fancy

with wild, delicate foot, flies winged from the presence of our dull luxuriousness.

Envy, mistrust, and anxious fears dwell with our barred and bolted magnificence. Treasures burden our mind with the leaden weight of their worth!

To Paul and Phyllis their little Wimpole Street house seemed a rare castle, filled with a radiant atmosphere, their simple possessions became priceless, as each day gave value to some new thing, drawing it into the mystic fold of their affection.

For her, the well-born books in the library no rich bindings could cover about with a charm like that the impress of Paul's student-fingers had given them; and Phyllis, in idle moments, delighted to read her husband's progress in their learned titles, gauging his student-zeal by the measure of their shabbiness.

She ranged his old pipes in decorative rows, as one might place objects of value, though only her fond, faithful eyes could detect any worth in the battered things.

His gun, his tennis-racquet, and his golf-clubs she touched with tender hands. To her they were subtly sacred, haloed about with the mystery of his manhood, instinct with the thrill of his strong life.

Even the pictures of charming womanhood it

pleases his sex to surround itself with, though she regarded these with jealous gaze, she would not banish. 'They are his, and he loves me best,' she said with a little pride, then wished, with a sudden self-abasement, that she might come nearer his ideal.

'My dear,' he insisted, 'I have never loved any woman but you, though I have made a fool of myself once or twice. Man is a brute till he loves, Phyl. It's a sort of evolutionary pivot on which he turns up or down. There are things you will never understand, not if you live to be a thousand, but it is because your comprehension is far and away above the things to be understood. See here, let us put these fine dames in the fire. Aphrodite of the Salon, Montmorency of the Empire, and the divine Sara.'

'Oh, Paul, but they are so pretty!'

'Oh, Phyl, but you have waked my besotted soul, and henceforth the soulless woman has no charm. She is dense flesh, tinted wax, a dull creature, who can no more compare with my peerless one than a tailor's dummy rivals Milo's Venus.'

'Ah! my dear, my dear, if only we might die now in our happiness!' she cried, leaning her delicate, loving head against him.

'By no means,' he protested, with a smile. 'I feel no considerable yearning in me for the tomb.'

Life is pretty comfortable just now, and I'm in no mood for romantic demise. With your permission we'll be happy just a little longer, Phyl.'

'It is too good to last, Paul. Oh, my love, my heart would break, I am so happy.'

'You did not say that the other night when I came home in such a shocking temper. Was I very bad?'

'Terrible! Your eyes flashed, and you frowned horribly. And you caught me up so short. I was awfully frightened.'

'But you stuck to your guns like a little Briton. Did I swear?'

'You said "damn" twice, Paul. Not out loud, but you said it!'

'Oh, blasphemous creature! But you should have kissed me, Phyl. You should have stopped my impious lips with your sweet ones.'

'Not while you frowned like that.'

'Phyl, we shall quarrel. I can see it coming. I see it in every line of your tip-tilted nose. My temper is detestable. It needs coaxing and soothing. You must be meek, dutiful and obedient, my wife. You have sworn to honour and obey, and you must not cross me.'

'To think of it!' she cried, tossing her curly head with a fine scorn. 'Now, that reminds me, Dr. Liveing, I have some commands to lay upon

you. Mr. Lamb has sent in his bill to-day, and it is far too large a one. Really, sir, you must not consume such great quantities of meat. I cannot afford it. Really, I can't. You must be more moderate.'

'Taking the bull by the horns, Phyl. You assume the offensive—the very offensive—so I must needs defend myself. Have I really eaten so much? Is it indeed such a large bill?'

'We shall be bankrupt!'

'Don't talk about it, Phyl. What a commonplace, housekeeping mind you have. Don't waste precious time, dear. I have been away all day. Phyllis, my wife, my love, come and kiss me, and say "I love you, I love you!"'

She sprang away from him, and held up a warning finger.

'Business first. Write me a cheque for poor Mr. Lamb.'

'Phyllis, I will write you a cheque for all I possess if you will just kiss me, and say "I love you, I love you, I love you!"'

'Oh, but I won't,' she said rebelliously; 'and I will only say it once. I don't want your money. I should be ashamed, if I were you, to buy protestations and kisses. Besides, you know it was you who had the lion's share. And Mr. Lamb—'

'Hang Mr. Lamb!' he cried, and, getting up

sulkily, he wrote that meek-named creature a cheque, with an air so fiery that it would be wonderful if the money it represented did not speedily burn a hole in the poor man's pocket.

'There you are, Phyl! Now, I hope you are satisfied, and will have done with butchers' bills for another three months. Come along, dear, I have deserved my kiss. I have had a hard day, such a long day, and a lonely day. Come and talk to me.'

But her mood had changed. She stood aloof, the light from the orange-shaded lamp falling full upon her.

She was wonderfully beautiful. Perfected love had made the girl into a woman, and touched each curve of face and figure with a subtler charm.

'No more to-night, Paul,' she answered, looking at him with serious eyes. 'Oh, I love you too well to let you tire of me. If I let you always kiss me when you will, the time would come, Paul, when you would no longer care to kiss me.'

'Never, never! Phyllis, must I come and take one for myself?'

'Ah, my dear,' and she returned quietly, then putting a caress upon her white fingers she laid them against his breast, 'I would not have you forget one little duty for my sake. I would have my love strengthen and help you. Are you not



sometimes afraid, Paul, lest such love as ours should pass into a weakness, a selfishness ? ’

She stood looking up at him, with the yellow light playing on her hair, the tender earnestness of her feeling paling her face and trembling in her liquid eyes. He bent his head, and kissed the hand that lay on his breast like a white thought.

‘ I shall never love you enough,’ he said.

‘ Good-night, my dear, my dear,’ she whispered, and softly left him.

When the next night came, what would she not have given to hide her wild eyes against him, and weep out her passionate love and longing.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

Grief boundeth where it falls,  
Not with the empty hollowness, but weight.

THE following day, while Paul stood waiting in the hall, before starting upon his morning round, waiting for Phyllis, who was to drive with him, a knock sounded upon the door.

He opened it, and De Richeville stood there.

‘Good heavens!’ he said, with a gasp.

The Marquis pushed his way in.

‘To my study!’ Liveing cried, recovering himself. ‘Quick, for goodness’ sake, or she will see you!’

But it was too late. She was halfway down the stairs, and had halted, staring at the new-comer with fascinated eyes.

‘Is it a terrible dream, Paul?’ she asked, in a choking voice, when he had sprung up the staircase and held her as she swayed giddily. ‘Is it a dream?’

‘Come to your room, Phyl,’ he said, gently.  
‘Come away. Leave me to talk to him.’

‘No,’ she answered, ‘I will go with you.’

She came quietly down the stairs and looked up at him.

‘They said you were dead,’ she whispered shudderingly. ‘Is it your ghost?’

‘Feel me,’ he returned, coldly, putting out his hand.

She shrank away.

‘Come in here,’ Liveing said, opening the study door. ‘Have we all gone suddenly mad?’

They went in, he helping and steadying her. De Richeville was the first to speak.

‘I am waiting,’ he began, with a lowering frown, ‘I am waiting for an explanation. I return from the Continent after a long absence and illness, and I find my wife apparently—’

‘Sir,’ Liveing broke in in a terrible voice, ‘if you are not careful of your words, I swear, before God, I will kill you where you stand.’

Phyllis cried out a little, and held his hand.

‘Be patient, Paul,’ she said. ‘Oh, he does not know what he says. They wrote to us that you had died. And I love him, and I am his wife.’

‘It isn’t legal, among civilised persons, for a woman to have two husbands,’ the Marquis replied insolently, ‘and, as you are my wife, you are—’

He did not finish. Paul had taken a step forward. He was not a coward, but the other's face did not tempt further speech.

There was a pause, then Liveing quietly explained.

'Six months since a letter came from James & Newcome, your solicitors, stating the fact of your death—that you had died at Eu. We were married last June.'

'Without troubling to prove the truth, or otherwise, of the statement.'

'It never occurred to anyone to suspect it. Why should we? It is not so uncommon for a man to die. The letter bore the signature of a good firm. How could anyone suppose it to be a fraud?'

'Oh, be sure, be sure I will see into this,' De Richeville blustered. 'Will you show me that letter?'

He was looking at Phyllis searchingly.

She wore a large feathered hat and a cloak. The soft shade deepened the lustre of her eyes, the clinging folds of her cloak outlined the grace of her figure.

His rage at the sudden loss of reason that had frustrated his plans had long ago been violently spent, but its evil after-glow shone lurid in his eyes, as he realised in her tender beauty that she was another's.

Fate had been too strong for him.

He would have forced her, on that second wedding-day, to escape disgrace by surrender to himself. But that, by his ill-timed incapacitation, his rival should have possessed her, was an event totally unlooked for, and his mad fury upon learning this had greatly aggravated his temporary madness.

Hence his long-delayed coming.

He blasphemed inwardly, to think how differently he had planned and anticipated. Seeing the tender affection of the eyes she fastened on that other's face, he cursed his self-caused incapacity, and the catastrophe it had wrought.

But he was still determined that she should be his. He now held a terrible power over her. Never would he acknowledge her as his wife. Dishonour should not come upon his name that way, but he would force her away from Liveing, and she should yield herself to him.

'Where is this letter you talk of?' he inquired.

'Oh, Paul,' she replied, 'I burnt it that night before we were married.'

'Then you have nothing to prove its receipt, nothing to justify you in a court of law? How are you going to prove it was ever written? How do you expect me to believe in its existence?'

'Aunt Janet read it.'

‘Ah!’ he commented.

The case was very clear.

‘Oh, Paul, Paul, what are we to do?’ she cried. ‘Speak to me, Paul. Say you see a way out of it. Oh, I was afraid—I was afraid. We were too happy.’

‘It would be more becoming,’ De Richeville interposed, ‘if you would confine your remarks to me. It is scarcely good taste to make love to him before my face. You seem to forget you are my wife.’

‘Oh, I am only *his* wife. Nothing could ever make me yours.’

‘Nevertheless, the fact remains. You are married to me, and he has no more right over you—you have no more claim upon him than—the girl in the street yonder.’

‘But we love one another.’

‘Your consideration for me—your husband—does you credit,’ he said, with a sarcastic bow.

‘Oh, Louis, you know I never cared for you. Why should I pretend?’

‘I know nothing of the kind. You liked me well enough till you saw him. And you will oblige me by not flaunting your fancy in my face.’

‘Have you no mercy?’ she pleaded.

‘You will see.’

‘Paul!’ she cried to him as he stood moody and silent, ways and means beating in on his sense with the press of his necessity, ‘send him away, Paul. He is nothing to you and me.’

‘That remains to be proved,’ he interrupted bitterly. ‘Women are fond of shielding themselves behind their irresponsibility, but the law will not accept that plea in this case. You have played a dangerous game. Bigamy is no light charge. Gad! it’s devilish cool for you to take the aggrieved position,’ he added. ‘Where do *I* come in?’

‘Your solicitors wrote that letter,’ Paul said suddenly, ‘under whose directions?’

‘Do you mean it was at my instigation? That is certainly a likely story. What interest had I in throwing my wife into your arms?’

‘Heaven only knows.’

‘And isn’t likely to volunteer evidence,’ he sneered. ‘You will have to get some more tangible testimony than that, though it appears you will find it difficult.’

Paul said nothing. The futility of resenting the enemy’s insolence had forced itself upon him early.

‘Sir,’ he said presently, in a quiet voice, ‘we shall settle nothing this way. The whole affair has been a horrible mistake. The only thing we can do is to consider her—to arrange best for her.’

‘I have no particular reason for considering her,’ the Marquis said. ‘She has never considered me, from the time she made a fool of me that day we were married till now, when she openly avows her predilection for you.’

‘It is a terrible position for her.’

‘She has only herself to thank.’

‘I swear solemnly she believed you dead.’

‘You can defer your oaths for an occasion when they may prove more profitable. I intend to put the matter into my solicitor’s hands, and let the law take its course.’

‘But her name—you know the ghastly consequences if scandal touches a woman.’

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders.

‘She is legally your wife. Her name is yours—your honour—’

‘You are too considerate, but you can leave me to look after that. Her association with my name has not done it so much credit that I need wish it to continue.’

Paul looked up quickly.

‘What do you mean?’

‘I mean to relieve her as soon as possible of any further responsibility to me or my name.’

‘What do you mean?’

De Richeville withdrew his gaze from Phyllis and looked with an evil menace at her lover.



‘What do I mean? I mean the divorce court.’

‘D—n you!’ Paul cried violently.

The two men eyed one another, Paul with the rage of a wild animal, the Marquis with the cold malignity of a man.

‘Are you a devil?’ Paul asked presently.

‘My honour, of which you were a moment since so considerate, demands it,’ De Richeville replied with a shrug of his shoulders.

‘Oh, my poor love,’ Paul said, ‘and I can’t save you.’

She had followed the conversation closely, looking with anxious eyes into their faces.

‘Oh, Paul,’ she said, ‘and then I should be freed from him.’

‘Free,’ he echoed, ‘free with the freedom the divorce court gives. My poor girl!’

‘But I should have you always.’

He disregarded her

‘Is that your final decision?’ he asked of the Marquis.

‘Certainly. There is an alternative,’ he added after a pause.

What?’

‘I am not anxious for it. I am pretty fairly indifferent to her.’

‘What is it?’

De Richeville turned to her.

‘Phyllis,’ he said, ‘I mean to divorce you. You are my wife, and you have disgraced yourself. You say there was a letter telling of my death; you haven’t it. You have nothing to substantiate your assertion. Everyone will laugh at you. You will be covered with shame—he also. On one condition I will stay proceedings. Now, listen. I have still a liking for you, for which you may congratulate yourself and him. If now you will return to me—’

She came forward with flashing eyes.

‘Oh,’ she cried, ‘if I could but kill you with my contempt!’

He returned her look with evil discomposure. He had believed she would accede to any terms.

‘Then, take your chance,’ he vociferated, after a minute. ‘Ruin yourself and him, and he will be the first to cast you off.’

‘He’s a liar and a detestable cad, Phyl,’ Liveing said, as she held piteous hands to him. Then, turning to De Richeville: ‘You can go,’ he said, ‘—to the devil.’

‘And leave my wife to follow me under your protection?’

‘Your wife will return to my cousin’s house.’

‘Oh, Paul, Paul, you will never send me away?’

‘It must be, dear, for a while. For your own

sake, for us both. You must be put right with the world.'

'Ah, my husband, need we care what the world says? Is not our love higher than that?'

'I am afraid we must, Phyl. We have to live in the world, you see, and it does not do to fly in its face. It is the law and the custom,' he concluded, with all a man's regard for the conventional. 'Then, if he succeeds in what he threatens, we shall be free to marry legally.'

'But if not?'

'In any case,' the Marquis interposed, with a flippant air, 'the reputation of both of you will be in Mrs. Grundy's talons.'

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

Grief fills the room up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,  
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,  
Stuffs out his vacant garment with his form.

DE RICHEVILLE, when he threatened, had but little thought of carrying out his threats, and, his anger having cooled, seeing the light by which those others saw it, that divorce would be the gateway of their irrevocable union, he was not moved to fulfil his menace.

That she was his wife was known to so few, that the stigma upon her could not essentially discredit him ; and as he had no desire to try matrimony a second time, and had, therefore, nothing to gain in the divorce court, he determined to take his revenge by letting the matter rest.

He returned presently to his normal ways of living, though of late these had somewhat palled upon him.

The thought of a might-have-been embittered

all his feeling—the might-have-been taking in his mind the form of an easy o'd age, tended by Phyllis's affection.

The picture was purely apocryphal, as no consideration whatsoever would have induced her to live with him ; her true instinct, having detected the moral leprosy, shrank from the terrors of contamination.

Lives are like lines—given that they proceed in diverging directions they can never meet, and time only puts a greater distance between them.

The girl, whose development had made for purity as the highest good, could but stifle within the area of his tainted strength.

Unwholesome living poisons the moral atmosphere, as disease fills the air we breathe with noxious germs, and it takes all the virtue of fair lives to sweeten moral air, as the oxygen of trees and flowers is needed to purify the breath of physical existence.

When the city no longer holds its ten righteous ones—moral disinfectants—it putrefies in its own exhalations ; tumult, chaos, and death—the inverted forces of peace, order and life—clash in upon it.

The white hands of woman are they that stay doom's fingers, and in those cases in which woman has yielded herself to scarlet laughter, heaven has

answered with its sullen flame and thunders, and vast civilisations have fallen.

We to-day have given to the wheel of evolution the momentous impulse of woman's freedom. Once set moving, it can never be stayed, gathering and ever gathering force, it will lift upwards, climbing the hill-tops, or speed the mighty down-rush of annihilation.

But ere it wings its course, woman, claiming liberty in all things equal with that of man, will cast away her social fetters, and, through a long night of darkness, man will learn first to fully value virtue, seeing vice in the fair face of sister, daughter, and wife.

It will be a hard teaching, but truth's well is filled with the waters of tribulation, which, though they be bitter in the tasting, sweeten after.

Until that time, when liberty will have taught and freed her, we shall continue to see innocent maidenhood linked with mature vice, and slowly assimilating itself to the degrading bondage, or, abhorrent, seeking moral lie in social suicide.

'What an absolute idiot the girl is,' his lordship reflected, 'to prefer a stuffy little house in Wimpole Street, and the vulgarity of shabby gentility to all I offer. Women are proverbially fools, but most of them are fully aware of the side on which their bread is buttered. Ninety-nine out of a hundred

will sell their souls for a title and Worth dresses. The devil only knows why I should have lighted on the infatuated hundredth !'

At times, when in his worst temper, seized with sudden fury, he would angrily write instructions to his lawyers to institute divorce proceedings. But he always countermanded these. He was unwilling to lose all hold over her, or to give her irrevocably to Liveing. In his cynical, worldly fashion, he trusted to the inevitable course of probabilities to bring disunion between the lovers, and then he believed Phyllis would inevitably drift within his reach.

Meanwhile the months passed, and Paul and his beloved remained apart, awaiting the issue of events. They never met, or even corresponded. Liveing was determined that the question of her good faith and innocent intention should not be negatived by any action of his.

Their only comfort was to exchange vows of ever-living devotion through the medium of Dr. Janet, whose hitherto strong and placid life was greatly disturbed by the catastrophe of their young loves.

Not a few silver threads wove themselves into the boasted blackness of her hair, as her sturdy, nervous system suffered under the strain of enforced inactivity on their behalf.

The pathos of Phyllis's eyes, which, though after her first wild outburst, she spoke little of her trouble, grew every day more appealing, pleading for news, for a word, as to how he looked, what he had said, and how he spent his lonely days, tormented her.

'Bless the girl,' she would remark crossly to herself, 'can she not forget him a moment? Is she to go through life always crying for the moon?'

But to Phyllis she was tender and kind. 'You must not get ill, little woman,' she would tell her, smoothing the bright, drooping hair with her big hand. 'You are getting to look like a pale, little ghost.'

'I am not ill,' was the quiet answer, 'only lonely. But Paul?'

'He is looking well, and speaks cheerfully. He has been very busy.'

'Yes,' she sighed, 'I know his brave, dear way.'



## CHAPTER XXXIV

We two stood there with never a third,  
But each by each, as each knew well :  
The sights we saw, and the sounds we heard,  
The lights and the shades made up a spell  
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

LIVEING, returning home one rainy night late from a professional visit, was letting himself into his house, when a well-known voice called to him, a trembling hand stole out of the darkness and laid itself upon his arm.

‘Good heavens, Phyllis, can it be you?’

She was standing in the shadow of the doorway.

‘Paul,’ she said faintly, ‘it is so long, and I wanted to see you.’

He drew her into the hall.

‘My darling, my sweet Phyllis,’ he whispered, holding her passionately in his hungry arms.

She shed some silent tears, clinging to him, then leaned her head upon his shoulder.

‘It is so good to be with you again,’ she said, with a pathetic quietness.

‘Oh, my wife, my love, my Phyllis!’

He kissed her a thousand times, Then he led her into his study, where a fire burned brightly.

‘You are cold and wet.’

‘I am happy—after six long months. Months like long years, Paul.’

He loosed the damp cloak from her, and took off her muddy shoes. Then with tender care he drew her chair to the fire and set her feet before its warmth.

Her eyes clung to him, drinking in the strength and protection of his presence.

She held his hand, and would not let it go, though he protested, smiling, that her fingers hampered his movements for her comfort.

‘It was so long, Paul, and we will never again be parted.’

He made no answer, but his face paled suddenly and his breath came fast.

‘We care nothing for the world, Paul, you and I. I am your wife, your loving wife, and you must never send me away. I cannot live without you. And you— Oh, my dear! how thin you are and white. And you look so lonely and neglected. Has it seemed long to you?’

‘Time has not flown, Phyl,’ he said, looking at her wistfully. ‘I spent some of it wondering how I had managed to get along before you came.’

What is the old brute going to do? Have you heard anything?’

She shook her head.

‘I went to James & Newcome about that letter, you know. They denied all knowledge of it. Never heard any report of his death. Thought I was making fools of them.’

‘Who could have written it, Paul?’

‘I can’t tell, but I cannot help thinking he had a hand in it himself.’

‘For what purpose?’

‘Goodness only knows!’

‘Do not let us talk about it. It is wasting time after all these months. I don’t believe hearts can break, or mine would.’

‘You don’t look robust, Phyl.’

‘Ah, but I am so happy now—so happy!’

She nestled to him softly.

‘Such white, thin fingers. Why, your rings are dropping off,’ he said, turning the slender digits in his.

‘Not from this one, Paul,’ she answered, lifting that which was bound with the plain gold band. ‘They say this finger leads to the heart, and it will always hold our wedding-ring fast, dear.’

He kissed the ring and finger.

‘Oh, shame on your anatomical ignorance, Phyl,’ he said, ‘and the examiners passed you.’

‘Were proud of me,’ she returned, with a happy laugh, the first since she had left him.

‘Good heavens!’ he exclaimed, smiling down at her, ‘and is this the superstitious stuff that is creeping into our learned profession?’

So they chatted, talking happy fond nonsense.

Two hours passed, and they still sat there, with no thought of anything but the joy of their re-union.

‘What do you say to some supper?’ Paul asked presently; ‘you look worn-out. Do you remember that night of the ball, Phyl, what a hungry little woman you were?’

‘And an angry one till you came.’

‘Did you like me then?’

‘I suppose I did, but I did not know it. Did you like me?’

‘Didn’t I? And didn’t you snub me, Phyl!’

‘I? Snub you?’

‘Rather! I was going to kiss you, you know.’

‘How could I know? Such a notion never came into my mind.’

‘How dense you must have been. Now, will you have some supper? I have had such extravagant dinners since you went, Phyl. I have taken to the pleasures of the table. Such butcher’s bills and baker’s bills! They would make a certain little woman’s straight locks stand on end!’

‘Oh, but you know they are not straight, Paul. You know I am proud of my curls.’

He smoothed their bright fine softness.

‘But you would never think what swagger dinners I’ve been having, Phyl. You were stingy to me, you know. You never gave me enough to eat, and scolded me for having any appetite.’

‘Well, you have had a long respite from my tyranny,’ she replied, with a sad little sigh.

He hunted wine and biscuits from the cupboard.

‘There’s no cake, Phyl, since you left.’

But she would not eat, and only tasted the claret he poured for her.

‘How tired you look!’

‘I don’t feel it. I have found rest, Paul. I feel as if I can never be hungry or tired or miserable again.’

She lay back in her chair, and closed her eyes peacefully, her lashes lying wet on her thin cheeks.

He stood looking down at her, gloomily. Then he said, all of a sudden, in abrupt rapid speech,—

‘Phyl, I must take you home. It’s late, and you are worn out.’

‘Home!’ she cried, starting. ‘I have no home but with you, Paul. I will never leave you again, oh, my dear.’

‘It has got to be, darling. I cannot keep you here. Don’t you see it would not do?’

‘Oh, I see nothing but that I am your wife in

God's sight and in our sight. Nothing shall part us again.' She got up and clasped her arms about his neck. 'You can never, never send me away.'

After a minute he loosed her arms.

'Phyllis,' he said hoarsely, 'I care for you too well to dishonour you. We must abide by the world, little girl. We're out of touch with God—if there be a God. *His* ways don't go for much with us. The world would shame you and sneer, and shun you. It's easy enough to brave it in a spurt, but you've got to live your life here, and shame would soon break your heart. The people, who know about it, have taken it better than people generally do, thanks to Janet, and we must do all in our power to keep you straight with them. Phyl, you must go. There is nothing for it but that. I who love you—well, you know how much, my darling—must send you away. I may not have you and protect you.'

'Paul,' she persisted, after a struggle, 'you dare not. You do not know. Our child—'

'No, Phyl, no. It can't be true.'

'Paul, it is true.'

He looked at her, searchingly, noting fully how her face was wan and drawn with the strain of a gathering life—the slim lines of her figure pathetically changed.

He caught her to him.

‘My heart,’ he cried, ‘how proud I should have been!’

‘*Are*, Paul, *are*. Oh, my husband, tell me you are proud and glad,’ she besought him passionately, her voice breaking into a terrible little cry. ‘Out of our love life has come, dear. Our little baby!’

He held her long in silence.

For a space they two fled together, soul within soul, ages beyond the narrow gates of mere convention, losing themselves in the grand broad quiet ways of nature, where the shallow little echoes of the world come not.

Then he folded her cloak about her, and knelt, tying her shoes.

‘Come, dear,’ he said, standing up. ‘It is late.’

‘Oh, you will never send me away,’ she wailed.

‘For goodness sake, don’t put it like that, Phyl. *I* send you away? *I*? It’s the world, custom, all the wretched artificiality of life.’

‘Is your heart made of stone?’

‘I wish to Heaven it were,’ he cried with rigid lips.

‘Oh, Paul—those long six months,’ she pleaded, ‘and the baby coming, and no one to help me. Ah, my dear, have you no pity?’

He kissed her face and throat and breast, and held her fiercely.

‘Oh, I could kill you,’ he cried wildly, ‘with my

love. Phyl, don't tempt me. Phyl, help me to do the right. Phyl, you are blinding me. You make me a selfish beast.'

'My dear,' she whispered, and nestled to him.

'Was ever man so tempted? Oh, why did you come? You were mad—cruel. Phyl, help me.'

'I will, dear,' she returned, and clung about him.

He wrestled with an agony, out of which he came ashen of face and exhausted.

'Do you remember,' he told her, 'on that last night you said you would not have my love for you tempt me to leave undone one thing? And now you ask me to be a scoundrel—to disgrace you before the world, to disgrace our child. Oh, you do not see things as they are.'

'I am your wife in the sight of God, and He has sent us a little child.'

He suffered bitterly.

'We must wait,' he insisted. 'Oh, can you not see how I suffer, how I need your help to do the right thing.'

'Nothing can be right that keeps us apart.'

He fastened her cloak about her, and raised her from her chair.

When she found he was resolute she broke out into passionate crying.

'It is for the best, my dearest,' he said hoarsely.

They went out into the wet night. There was a



dark fog over everything, and a dismal falling of rain.

They had not far to go. He rang the night-bell, and in a few minutes Dr. Janet came down.

‘Take care of her,’ he said in a choking voice.  
‘And, for God’s sake, keep her away from me!’

## CHAPTER XXXV.

Until of many thousand kisses the poor last I lay upon thy lips.

THAT night her child was born.

Through the long, terrible hours of a mother's travail she lay uncomfited, alone, with no proud father to take her firstborn into his arms and kiss the agony from her lips.

When her ordeal was over, leaving her white and helpless on her pillows, she looked dully into the little face.

‘Take it away,’ she said, ‘oh, take it away.’

It was a puny, premature thing that moaned unceasingly and refused to be comforted for all the woe its mother's misery had woven into its developing life.

It harped always upon a sad minor key of pain, wailing and wailing, with a dismal drawn look on its diminutive face. It was too fragile to bear the strain of dressing, so they swathed it in cotton-wool and tied it round with bright ribbons.

But it continued to wail, though its protest grew

every hour more infrequent and faint, and at last ceased altogether.

The tiny, complaining voice was hushed forever; the soul, having been drawn from the void of vast formlessness into the little focus of human pain, winged its way willingly back to the boundless abstraction of space.

Phyllis expressed no sorrow at the baby's death. She only lay quiet and uninterested.

Dr. Janet looked anxiously into her apathetic face.

On the third day she was in a state of high fever, with brilliant, burning eyes and flushed cheeks.

Her pulse beat with mad rapidity and force, as though the heart had suddenly escaped the bondage of languor that so long had held it, and now leapt tumultuously towards freedom. The mind, set for weary months to the sharpness of grief, gave itself now to the fitful abandon of delirium.

The limbs, which had drooped with a leaden depression, seemed strung with a sudden tension of unrest, and tossed ceaselessly.

She raved about Paul, De Richeville, and her child, incoherently, continuously, now, with a smile on her face, going back to her girlhood, now shrinking abhorrent from her husband's embrace, now yielding to Paul's kiss.

Then her mind reverted laboriously at intervals to its student experiences, and she spent hours in

the iteration of chemical formulæ and pharmacopœial data. Again, she would hush and soothe an imaginary infant, holding it feverishly to her hot breast.

Only when Liveing, summoned to her bedside, stood beside her, did she show any sign of recognition.

‘I can see you,’ she muttered, her wild eyes fixed upon him. ‘It is Paul, but you must not tell him I killed the baby. Her name was Phyllis, and I held her throat. She should not live to grieve Paul. Oh, take him away,’ she cried all at once, her gaze lighting on a shadow in a corner of the room. ‘Paul, Paul, don’t let him touch me. I want my lips clean for you, dear. Oh, why didn’t you send him away?’ she wailed. ‘Why did you let him kiss me? Is it Momus come to life? How he laughs! Oh, I hate you, I hate you!’

She was silent, her eyes always watching and rolling restlessly as if painfully trying to make something tangible out of the chaos of her vision. Then she leant forward,—

‘He’s gone!’ she cried, heartbrokenly. ‘Oh, why did you let him go? He hates me because I held the baby’s breath. Paul, Paul, she was our white flower, and he would have kissed her. He’s gone, he’s gone, he will never come back,’ she moaned, passing her fevered fingers over her eyes.

He knelt beside her, and held her hands, and spoke to her gently, moistening the dry, brown lips.

She was not violent, and took what was given, though she cried and resisted a little.

For a week the fever continued, during which day and night Dr. Janet and Liveing in turn watched by her.

Then the temperature fell suddenly, the burning skin became moist, the brown tongue ceased its cries and muttering, and the eyes closed quietly in sleep.

She awoke faint and weak, with a ghastly pallor and wasted limbs, and they feared lest the reaction from high fever should let the powers slip so low that death would close over her.

But she slowly recovered strength, albeit the mental incoherency continued.

She recognised no one, but lay listless and weak, generally silent, but breaking sometimes into meaningless speech.

The utmost anxiety was felt lest the brain's coherency should be finally destroyed. Dr. Janet and Liveing brought all their skill to bear upon the patient. Specialists, moreover, were summoned but all were agreed that nothing except time and rest could re-establish the lost equilibrium.

Liveing blamed himself bitterly.

‘She was right,’ he said, ‘and I was a crass fool. She was not strong enough to bear her trouble alone. I flung moral maxims into her face. I hurled the world at her, and broke her heart. When she gets well—and she shall, she must get well—we’ll defy the world, Phyllis. We’ll laugh at Mrs. Grundy, my dear. I’ll take you to the other side of the earth, and see if love can’t make up for what we lose here.’

She was lying on a couch at the window, wanderingly and wonderingly watching the passers-by.

She nodded and smiled faintly at him.

‘I hear,’ she said, holding up a thin hand. ‘The birds are singing and there are flowers.’

‘I am afraid there are not, dear,’ he returned, with a swelling heart. ‘It’s only dingy, old London in a fog, but, please God, you shall hear the birds again and see the flowers.’

‘Paul is dead,’ she broke in, ‘Paul and the baby. And I must die too. Paul won’t be happy without me.’

‘There’s not much doubt of that,’ he assented, grimly. ‘Not in heaven even, if they would have me there.’

‘You did not know my Paul,’ she continued, with a smile on her thin face. ‘He had such beautiful eyes.’

Eyes that were full now with a tension, which in a woman would have relieved itself in tears, as he heard her and saw the pathetic wistfulness of her look.

Sometimes there came a momentary, swift concentration in the wandering gaze, and she would start up, lift her hands sharply to her head, then feel out wildly, with a sudden, eager intensity.

‘I have lost it,’ she would cry hopelessly, and revert to her customary melancholy.

They took her to the sea when she was strong enough to bear the journey, but the weather was wild and bleak, and she was frightened by the howling of the wind and the roar of the waves as they thundered up the beach.

The sounding of its ceaseless fret and murmur, when she was conscious of it, only produced a nervous restlessness in her, and increased her depression.

So they took her home again, where she was within reach of Liveing, whose presence soothed and quieted her.

But she remained still listless and apathetic.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

To every man upon this earth  
Death cometh soon or late,  
And how can man die better  
Than facing fearful odds,  
For the ashes of his fathers  
And the temples of his gods.

FOR some days Dr. Janet had gone about her business with a frown on her resolute face and stern determination in her firm mouth.

She looked at the languid figure lying always on its couch, idly playing with restless thin fingers, the gaze of its large eyes wandering uninterested and unmoved upon all surrounding objects, then she scowled forbiddingly and with a severity that boded ill for someone.

At last the notion, which had been slowly formulating, became a fixed resolve.

‘I will keep quiet no longer,’ she exclaimed emphatically. ‘He shall do something to alter things. I will torment his life out, but he shall make an end of this!’



With these words she threw on her cloak, donned a formidable-looking bonnet, and went out.

She hailed a cab, and drove to De Richeville's handsome house in Piccadilly.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening, and the man who opened the door demurred at admitting her.

'It's as much as my place is worth, to disturb his lordship so late.'

But Janet was accustomed to being obeyed, and learning that the Marquis was at home, she walked coolly into the hall, and announced her intention of waiting until he should be free to see her.

'But his lordship is at dinner, ma'am,' the footman remonstrated, though meekly.

There was an expression in the visitor's dark eye that daunted him.

'I will wait,' she insisted. 'Give him my card.'

She was ushered presently into a library well stored with treasures of literature, priceless thought clad in rich bindings. Here, in good company, De Richeville sat, wearing a bored look, which became exaggerated into a chilling formality as she entered.

When the door was closed she stood facing him.

'You remember me?' she queried curtly.

'I remember you,' he replied, with equal curtness.

'The recollection is apparently not agreeable,' she commented.

He shrugged his shoulders, as if deprecating the necessity for controverting a self-evident fact.

‘May I ask what you intend to do in the matter of your wife?’

‘May I answer that that is my affair entirely?’

As she remained standing, he rose and leaned indifferently against the mantel-board.

He had been pursuing a course of abstinence, in order to counteract the results of previous indulgence, and the regime appeared to have reduced the temperature of his blood to freezing-point.

Dr. Janet shivered before him.

‘You are at liberty, of course, to do as you choose,’ she remarked. ‘But I should advise you not to defer your action too long, or it will be too late.’

He waited for an explanation. The unwholesome fires of his eyes were quenched. Only the dull ashes of dead desires were in them.

‘Phyllis was confined six weeks ago. The baby died. She had an attack of puerperal fever, and her health and reason are dangerously affected.’

‘Ah!’

There was still some fibre of him—perhaps not a very exalted one—with which the idea of her was bound up, if one might judge by the contraction about his lips as the monosyllable escaped them.

‘Why don’t you divorce her?’ Janet went on.

'At present my cousin's hands are tied. We will not contest it. Set her free and he will marry her and take her abroad. The change might lead to her recovery.'

'Are you aware that you are appealing to me to assist my wife to another marriage?' he said sarcastically.

'I am quite aware of it. But it might save her from death or hopeless insanity.'

A sudden suspicion shot out from beneath his ragged brows.

'I should like to see her.'

'At once, if you please. I have a cab waiting.'

He called for his coat, and they went out together.

Phyllis lay on her couch under the lamplight, white, thin and haggard, with dark heavy circles beneath her eyes and a wide vacancy in them. The wasted outline of her limbs showed pitifully through her loose gown, her hands worked in their ceaseless purposelessness.

She seemed to recognise him as he entered. A shudder passed through her.

'Oh, send him away!' she cried, starting up; 'go away, Louis! I killed the baby. She was Phyllis, and you would have kissed her.'

Then her gaze wandered past him, and she sank back upon her pillows.

‘Paul,’ she whispered, ‘Paul, I am coming, I am coming. Why do they keep me here? Mother, isn’t he kind? And I shall be a Marquise.’

Then she crooned and murmured and made pretence of clasping a baby.

‘The baby’s just like Paul. Who’s Paul, mother?’

De Richeville looked strangely at her. There are few things that affect us so terribly as does the loss of reason in those we have known.

For some minutes he contemplated the wreck of her mind and beauty, then turned away with an ugly face.

‘What is this she says about killing the child?’ he asked, with a little difficulty.

‘Nothing but a part of her mania, thank Heaven,’ Dr. Janet answered.

‘Well, I don’t find it amusing,’ he said, with a short laugh.

He followed Dr. Janet into her study.

‘This might have happened under any circumstances,’ he suggested.

‘Her health was good, her mind clear. No, it would happen only under specially trying circumstances—circumstances such as existed in her most unfortunate case.’

‘Is she likely to recover?’

‘Every day lessens the probability. She might be saved by a sea-voyage—with Dr. Liveing.’

‘Curse him,’ he muttered between his teeth.

‘He has some little influence over her yet. She is quiet with him, and has brief intervals of lucidity.’

‘But what have I to do with it? What do you expect of me?’

‘As I suggested, set her free. Get your divorce as quickly as possible, and let Paul do his best with her.’

‘By God!’ he exclaimed violently, bringing his fist down forcibly upon the table. ‘I’ll do nothing of the kind. I swear, if I can’t have her, he shall not.’

‘So far as seems likely, poor child, she will soon be out of reach of either.’

He fidgeted in his chair.

‘Was there ever such a beastly affair!’ he muttered.

‘At least you might make her the little reparation possible. You can cover her with mud, and toss her reputation to the winds *vid* the divorce court, and in doing so give her her last chance of sanity and life. It is not much to ask, but it is all I *do* ask.’

‘And I swear it’s more than I’ll give,’ he vociferated. ‘She’s made her bed, and must lie on it, sane or insane.’

Oh, Janet! if you had only Jove’s thunders, how long would this man revile!

She glanced at him with a terrible scorn.

‘Shall I tell you what I should do, were I in your place?’ she inquired after a pause.

‘It would doubtless serve me for a noteworthy example,’ he sneered.

She looked him full and unflinchingly in the face.

‘I am a doctor,’ she said slowly; ‘you, a soldier. Our methods would probably differ, but the end is easy to either.’

He returned her gaze with a grim composure. Then he drew his hand, on edge, across his throat, and smiled grotesquely.

She made no answer. Only a little levelling of her lids gave assent.

After a short silence he broke into hoarse laughter.

‘By Lucifer!’ he cried, ‘you are a bold person. I should not particularly care to trust myself into your hands. Does your creed—if you have one—by the Lord, does it put a man’s life at his disposal, and let him blow out his brains for a fancy? Without doubt you would obligingly administer a dose suitable for my case.’

‘My creed,’ she returned steadily, ‘holds that a life which is worthless to itself and harmful to others may, in some way, atone by sacrifice. I hold that any life is only a fraction of existence; that our threescore and ten years are but a page of an

endless book ; that eternity is filled for each one of us by countless such pages, whereby we learn and grow wise.'

'The parsons say death plunges us into hell or heaven,' he remarked, prolonging the subject with a malicious perversity.

'The parsons are fools ! Seventy years of sin could not merit an eternity of punishment. Seventy years of petty, immature, feeble, groping impulses could not fit us for heaven. The evolution of the body subtends the evolution of the soul, and we have infinity before us.'

'I ought to be obliged for the value you place upon my particular immature, feeble impulses.'

'Your soul was put into a body, which held in it affirmations and negations of good. To you has been given the evolution of a part of the great human scheme. How have you fulfilled the trust ? Is the world, or are you, the better because you have lived ?'

He made no reply, sitting before her with an ugly sneer.

'I tell you, that you, and all with whom you have come into relation, are distinctly the worse for the fact of this life of yours. You have allowed all your possibilities to devolute. You have so degraded the avenues of thought and sense, that your body ministers only to that which is corrupt in you.

A blind man can never learn the mysteries of form and colour. You have wilfully covered your eyes with materialism, till they are blind to all it is good for you to see. It would be a release to your soul to free it from the blindness and disease of your faculties. Give it another chance. It is far too late for you to mend. A second childhood may dull your powers to incapacity, but for all purposes of evolution and development, which are the purpose of life, your remaining years are a blank. Give your soul another chance, I say. Better fling it free on the boundless generosity of nature, than tie it tighter in the knot of your unworthy life.'

'Madam,' he sneered, 'I learn wisdom at your lips. I regret only that your eloquence has no larger audience. What a pity it is that you cannot induce a number of your unregenerate fellows to seek wholesale suicide, and return their worthless lives in mass upon "the boundless generosity of nature." But how will you persuade them that they will not rather fling themselves upon the boundless hospitality of the devil?'

'Sir,' she replied, 'it is no jesting matter with me. I know too well what your life is. I know also your terrible share in this business, your instigation of that letter containing the lie of your death. You need not protest. I befriended New-



come's child, the only thing he cares about, and he confessed the whole thing. It was a base trick for some end of your own, but it has gone further and has done deplorable work.'

His confident manner changed. He shrank before her.

She touched him but little when she spoke of his higher part, but the sense he called his honour was his last remaining green spot.

'You can repeat any damnable lie you choose,' he cried ferociously, 'but it does not prove it. And you may spare yourself further exertion in the matter of my wife and your cad of a cousin. I am not likely to be affected by your diatribes. They were sufficiently diverting at the start, but one tires, and you will excuse me if I wish you good-evening.'

Saying which, he took up his hat and went out.

Dr. Janet, going upstairs some minutes later, was surprised to find Phyllis stand trembling beside her couch.

'What has happened?' she asked, turning frightened to her friend. 'Where is Paul? Why am I here? Was not that terrible man here just now? Oh, tell me what it all means, and why I feel so ill?'

'You have been ill, dear Phyl,' the other answered, holding her quietly, and examining her

with anxious attention, fearful lest this sudden return to reason should be but a temporary, fitful flare.

‘I remember nothing. Where is Paul? Was the baby born? Oh, Aunt Janet, where is my baby?’

‘Take her, Paul,’ Aunt Janet exclaimed to Living, who just then came in on his daily evening visit. ‘Take her and comfort her, and, for Heaven’s sake, hold her tight this time.’

‘Please God, I will,’ he returned, with a blaze of joy as he looked into her sane, steady eyes, and clasped her, weeping, to him.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,  
Where death's approach is seen so terrible.

In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall lie.

DE RICHEVILLE thrust his hat down over his eyes and walked out into the street.

‘Where to, sir?’ asked the cabman, lifting a finger hatward.

‘To the devil!’ was the sullen rejoinder.

‘Any preference as to the route, sir?’ inquired his Jehu, cheerfully gathering up the reins.

He had driven an omnibus, and was a bit of a wag.

‘Back to Piccadilly.’

But the cabman’s horse had apparently noted the first injunction, and, having been reared on strictly orthodox principles, proceeded to show his disapproval of the destination indicated, by vigorously backing.

‘Whoa-a then, Joey,’ his master persuaded, laying the whip affectionately across his ears.

Whereon Joey sprang forward with a jerk, and evidently changing his mind, flung rapidly along, adopting a pace and recklessness emblematic of the *facilis descensus* he believed himself to be taking.

‘Gad,’ De Richeville ruminated, as they dashed across Oxford Street, and tore down New Bond Street, ‘what a fiend the woman is! Talks of suicide as a mere joke. Wouldn’t stick at murder, I suppose, if that occurred to her as a way out of her difficulties.’

But he knew, as he spoke, that he was speaking falsely.

Dr. Janet’s keen glance had cut through his outer crust, peering insistently at the man beneath, and as he felt her sharp eyes among the skeletons and dust of his well-groomed exterior, she subjected him to a humiliation he could not forgive.

He hated her accordingly, and revenged himself by calling names.

‘The little fool, Phyllis, has only herself to blame for it all,’ he persisted. ‘Why the devil didn’t she behave like any other woman would have done—thank her lucky stars for her good fortune and set about making the most of it? There must always have been a strain of insanity in her, and her own confounded folly has served to develop it. And now that brute of a doctor woman blames me.’

A minute later, the excited cab-horse, pursuing his break-neck pace, swerved suddenly at some imaginary obstacle in the Avernian path, then came to a dead stand.

The Marquis, occupied with his reflections, lost his balance, and was thrown violently to one side, his head striking with considerable force against the window-board.

After a moment, in which his master objured him from a sulphurous vocabulary, the animal recovered his composure, and proceeded on his way.

But, on arriving at their destination, the occupant making no sign, the cabman peered inquisitively through his small trap-door. He perceived his fare lying to one side, with his head bent forward on his chest.

‘Blest if my lord ain’t as drunk as a lord,’ he chuckled, and, climbing down from his perch, he rang the bell.

‘His lordship’s been dining, Jimmy,’ he remarked to the responding footman, ‘and he’s bin and took too much sparrergrass! You and me ’ull have to carry him in and put him in his little bed.’

Stanley St. John, so named by a fond and romantic mother, ignored the cabman’s facetious familiarity, and, disclaiming all connection with the

generic term James, especially when vulgarly abbreviated to 'Jimmy,' proceeded with a dignified air to open the cab door.

'Great Scott!' he cried, 'the master's dead!'

'You confounded fool,' the Marquis expostulated faintly, lifting his head a little, 'give me a hand. I've only had a bit of a knock with this devil of a horse.'

They got him in, he meanwhile exhausting the fairly-extensive nether-limits of the British language, and stimulating the men's energies by an exhibition of various foreign niceties of speech, which experience had shown him possessed the efficacy of hidden terrors.

He refused to allow a doctor to be summoned.

'I am only a bit shaken,' he protested. 'What the deuce is there to make such a fuss about?'

The servants, having no further interest in him than that he was the source whence came their comfortable housing, good food and liberal salaries, gave themselves no further concern about him, and, after furnishing him with the brandy he demanded, descended to their cosy quarters.

'He's a nice 'un,' Stanley confided to John Thomas.

'Ah, he's all that,' the latter agreed, and they returned to their cards.

Meanwhile, the Marquis sat alone in the library,

his feet in the fender, and a table on which stood glasses, water and brandy, by his side.

His head ached dully with the violence of the blow he had received. His face was ashen, and his hands shook so that he could scarcely pour himself a glass of water.

‘Best to take nothing stronger,’ he decided. ‘It might set up fever.’

So he lay back, looking into the fire, a lonely man, upon whom shivering old age seemed to have rushed down in the space of an hour.

He had few acquaintances, and no friends. Of late he had given up all social life, and only met his fellows in the atmosphere of club existence, where he was known generally as ‘a selfish old beast, who won’t budge an inch for a fellow, you know.’

He had no feminine relations—a fact for which he had often blessed the providence that ministered to his amusements, though, at the particular moment we are spending in his company, he was experiencing the need of a feminine companionship, incorrupt and unpurchasable.

‘She ought to be here to look after me,’ he said peevishly. ‘What a mess the affair has been.’

The energy of the mind is generally in some relation with the physical strength, but sometimes, when the powers are at their lowest, thought leaps

up clearest and most intense. After a while the Marquis became sensible of a numbness and aching in his limbs, and a feeling of great bodily fatigue. But his brain was busy, and he thought with a new force and strange lucidity.

He moved restlessly and uneasily, looking with fixity into the fire.

‘A worthless life, a life valueless to yourself and harmful to others.’ The words flickered fitfully and flame-written in the blaze.

‘Good heavens!’ he muttered, ‘am I going to wax sentimental, “get religion,” or commit some such vulgar idiocy? My life has been about like other people’s, only I have had more time and means to please myself. Who’s to decide where right ends and wrong begins? Society talks a deal of cursed rubbish. One so soon goes out like the snuff of a candle, one had best have a good time while he can.’

But he shifted uneasily as he reassured himself; for his faculties, thrown altogether out of gear, seemed to be illuminated, the one and the other, by curious, intermittent, lightning gleams.

Some horrible, morbid distribution of nerve force stimulated the brain powers irregularly, throwing each in turn into prominent relief beside, and independently of, its fellows, setting all strangely peering into one another’s faces—reflection staring



at consciousness, consciousness examining recollection, recollection reviewing action.

Conscience flared up faintly, flitting feebly in the storehouse of memory, casting weak lights and shadows amid its contents. And of what a nature these were.

Bones of dead instincts, lying mouldering in heaps, skeleton fingers of mutilated impulse, shades of slim treacheries, shadows of smiles, tears dripping like a noisome sweat everlastingly in dim corners, curses creeping as venomous creatures from crevices like foul lips, lean hounds of evil hunger pacing restlessly, powers and aspirations rotting like bunches of fœtid flowers, everywhere blind passages, tortuous paths reaching an abrupt ending, and, over all, dust—grey volumes of dust that choked and lay thick upon everything, stirring at intervals with a horrible suggestiveness of hidden, noisome life.

And all the while shrill, broken laughter shrieked round the corners, and cunning eyes gleamed up from every rat-hole in the ruined place.

Chill avarice stole in and out, sweeping together the dust and bones and ringed, dead hands, raking in the terrible rubbish, and crooning above it with greedy gaze.

Down in the heart the blood flowed sluggishly, for foul, fungoid growths had sprouted amid the

valves, and lifting and falling with the tidal wave, impeded the life-current.

The blood stream moaned through the fringed, finger-like clutch of the morbid things, which stretched and clung and palpitated with each pulse, battening like loathsome parasites in the heart hollows, till the organ, harassed and hindered, had sorely atrophied, and pale jets leaked and spouted thinly through all its disabled valves.

Shadows of self sat at the sources of thought, strangling with silent, sinewy grasp the mind's offspring, devouring the immature bodies with saturnian ravenousness.

Eye looked in eye and saw the gross beam, each of the other. Ear listened into ear and heard the dull smother of cries that had found no generous human outlet.

And the hands and limbs were wasted and warped with a lifetime of self-service.

The Marquis turned from his task of inlooking, seeking comfort in the luxury and rich refinement of his room, but the dust, which had been disturbed by the dislocation of his powers, fell in grey, trembling showers before his eyes, making fantastic flocks of moth and rust upon his treasures.

Stirred by the palsy of his mind, the graveyard of his life gave up its dead, and these in dire corruption, with ghastly visage and in the odour of

uncleanness, came hustling from their tombs, and dashed hideous hands at him.

The room without took on the likeness of the within, and the greedy, evil glances from the rat-holes watched him with an eager, gruesome ominousness.

Memory cast forth her corpses, and these crawled out and came and stood before him, sickening him with noisome look and breath.

‘I, and I, and I,’ they cried, and struck at him.

Corpses of callous wrong, corpses of evil delights, lies worming up about his feet, treacheries beating down like winged bats, wronged friends, deluded foes, the wife, the mother and the maid, crowded about him, showing their wounds and cursing him.

All the powers of his brain fought the one against the other, flying in mad fear from before their risen dead, hurling down upon him the ruin they could no longer hide.

Anyone looking into the room would have seen nothing but a pallid, shrunken old man lying in an easy-chair before a dying fire, an old man surrounded by luxury and rare refinement, only he, seeing himself through the medium of self, could perceive the ghastly group that menaced him, the fierce eyes in gaping cracks, the batlike, furtive creatures, the crawling things, the dead, protesting hands and cries, and, over all, the falling dust that

had wrapped the horrors about, and entombed them in the graveyard of his mind.

He moved a little, and brushed a hand across his eyes. It seemed to him the lashes were feathery white with it and the cornea encrusted. He could feel it falling on his hair with the softness and weight of snow. It filled his ears and dulled his senses, it got into his nostrils and throat, till he was nearly stifled. It tasted nauseous on his tongue, sickly with the putrefying odour of the foulness it had hidden.

It lay like a leaden weight upon his chest, and leapt and palpitated where the strangling growth swelled in the chambers of his heart. Beneath his dust-laden brows, and between the weighted lashes, he looked at his lifted hands. They also were heavy with the clammy fall, and the selfish warp of the fingers was heaped with the dull dust. And still it kept falling, falling, dropping from skeleton arms, and the gaunt corpse frames, shaken from the wings of crying creatures.

‘I shall soon be stifled,’ the Marquis muttered, looking with evil, watchful eyes at the evil, watchful things. ‘Where the devil does it all come from, and why don’t someone come and turn the beasts out?’

But it was only his life resurrected—his life stripped of the gew-gaws in which he had clad it ;

sophistries and treacheries writhing like worms or wicked lips ; fair sins flayed of their rosy skins ; pleasant vices truth-branded ; scarlet laughter creeping like blood-stains ; aims rotting ; powers corrupting into curses ; greed of sense strangling good in its snake-like grip ; avarice grasping with lean hands ; and, over all, the dust of sloth and callousness falling, falling, wrapping the horrors silently about, hiding the hideous things within the limits of a human life, damming the avenues of inlet and outlet, so that no breath of wholesome feeling might whirl in and sweeten the evil place. Callousness and sloth, sloth and callousness, dulling with flocculent touch the cry of the stifling soul, turning the mainsprings of life into muddy, sluggish channels, filling the ears that might hear, blinding the sight, benumbing and stiffening the hand's supple helpfulness.

With a sudden wrench, the mind had become unhinged ; its balance spoilt, and the dust and *debris* of years were disturbed and swept forth with a fierce force, letting the entombed tumble out in their ghastly grave-clothes ; smothering the man with the hideous fantasy of his life ; choking him with the refuse he had gathered in.

‘D—n you! keep off!’ the Marquis shouted, fighting the phantoms with his withered fists, and madly scattering the falling, falling dust, which every movement only seemed to fling the freer from its fastness.

'D—n you! d—n you! d—n you! don't come nearer, you beasts!' he cried, as they rose and gathered and threatened amid the cloud of grey, dull particles that blinded his watching eyes, as if in league with the menacing fiends.

But that which most of all the threatening things he feared was the wraith of a little child, with broken wings, and a tiny wail, that fluttered about him, brushing his face with blood-stained feathers, and shaking red pitiful drops from its wounded wings.

He knew the pathetic look in its grey eyes, and heard her voice in its wailing cry. The poor little broken-winged thing sought trembling to lay itself upon his breast; its little head drooped tired, and it flew down feebly, dropping its blood upon his head.

He fought it ferociously back. It was the most terrible of all. It cried as he struck at it, and leaned faintly towards him.

Its tiny limbs were thin and wasted, its face diminutive, but out of it looked the grey, sad shadows of *her* eyes, and he struck at it vengefully.

But his fierceness only brought the dust down falling thicker, and the wailing wraith hovered nearer, touching his breast with little yearning hands, fluttering its blood-stained wings into his face.

The Marquis, with a wild cry, presently stood up, for, while he had fought against some resurrected form, the babe had approached him unawares and laid its fragile frame against him, touching his throat with seeking lips.

He sprang up with a wild cry and flung it off, stepping with staggering feet upon slippery things.

He flung the clinging infant from him, and shook the weight of dust from chest and hair and eyes.

Then, with gaze fixed on the array of watching evils, he backed towards a cabinet standing in a corner of the room.

As he retreated, the shades came on. He could feel some cling about his legs and crunch beneath his heel. With fierce eyes fixing them, he still backed slowly, and drew his keys from his pocket.

Not the tremor of an eyelid dared he yield to, lest they should be upon him, breathing their noisome breath into his nostrils, dashing their terrible hands into his face.

The phantom babe came likewise, crawling along the floor, lifting its tiny hands to him and wailing.

So he retreated, they following close, keeping the distance his fixed eye focussed. It seemed years that he moved—they moving after—but at last he struck against the cupboard sharply.

Then, without turning—his eyes still fixing them

—with one hand beating off the dust, he put the other behind him, feeling for the keyhole.

Meanwhile, as he stood before the cabinet, the dust fell thicker and the shades came on.

With frantic fingers, groping behind him, he presently made out the keyhole, and tried to fit it.

But in his nervous haste the bunch fell with a crash and lay beside him, on the ground. He dared not remove his gaze a moment from his enemies, who waved their arms, and breathing noisomely, advanced.

He could feel the baby hands about his feet and the point of a drooping wing brushed him, and he felt one terrible drop fall between the trouser edge and shoe.

With a fierce rage he kicked it from him, and in mad fear stooped and found the keys.

When he stood up they were on him, whirling a horrid wind about him, putting their putrid fingers into his eyes.

With one hand he still fought them, with the other, carefully, stealthily, in an agony of precision, fitting the key.

It took him some minutes, unsteady as his hands were, concentrated as his attention was upon his gruesome foes. At last the key slipped in.

He opened the door feverishly, and with trem-



bling hand felt into the cupboard, running his shaking touch along its interior.

The fiends were close about him now, flinging their limbs upon him, and laughing with mirthless devilry. His right hand, searching in the cabinet, came presently upon a long, flat box. He shouted demoniacally as he opened it and felt the smooth, cold steel of the comfort he sought.

He clutched it with mad eagerness, and a horrible terror seized him lest those others should wrest it from him.

But he battled frantically, gripping it close. Then he slowly drew it forth, holding it in an agony of dread. He brandished it before him, thrusting its nozzle into the horrid ranks.

It was cocked. He pulled the trigger with an intensity of frantic triumph. There was a flash, a burst of smoke and a loud report. But the dust ceased not from falling. Only a rustling laugh, like the rattle of dry bones, answered him, and the evil shapes clung round him.

With startling, staring eyes regarding them, he re-cocked the pistol. Holding it in his fevered grasp, he put the cold lips to his temple. But the pistol missed fire. With a terrible oath he cocked it again and pushed the muzzle into his mouth.

After one last, devilish, defiant dash at them, he pulled the trigger.

Again there arose a flare of fire, a puff and a burst of sound.

The Marquis fell dead, his features torn and shuddering with a horrible mutilation.

And the foul terrible fiends closed in, flinging their ghastly forms upon his fallen body, fastening upon his freed, maimed soul, and worked their will!

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

God answers sharp and sudden on some prayers,  
And thrusts the thing we have prayed for in our face,  
A gauntlet with a gift in't.  
Every wish  
Is, like a prayer, with God.

DR. JANET sat in her consulting-room when they brought her the news.

She received it quietly. But they who knew her, might have learnt much from a sudden tremor of her hands, and the darkening of her strong face.

‘I am at home to no one this morning,’ she said in a clear voice, ‘and am not to be disturbed.’

Two hours she sat motionless, with twitching lips and deep lines dragging down the corners of her mouth, her dark eyes gloomy and moist.

The fire smouldered out, and she heard nothing of the traffic in the street outside, nothing of the movement within.

When the clock on her mantelpiece sounded the passing of the second hour, she rose and pushed the hair back from her massive forehead.

She set her lips firmly, and in their wonted strong placidity.

‘I am a wicked woman,’ she said, ‘but I thank God that he did it.’

Saying which, two tears rolled out of her dark, fine eyes and fell upon her large hands !

THE END.

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